

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.:

This is a great gathering. As we look out over this sea of faces and see the crowd in the doorways and standing and sitting in the aisles, we all feel that this is the greatest meeting we have ever had. I do believe that tonight in the matter of numbers, we have the largest number the Church has ever seen. There is no other place in the world where this could occur, because in no other place in the world could there be a body of Priesthood of this size holding the Priesthood of God.

I shall have something to say a little later so I shall say no more now.

Elder Eben R. T. Blomquist will please come to the stand. Brother Alma Peterson, if he is here, former president of the Danish Mission, will please come to the stand now, and President E. Bentley Mitchell of the Tahitian Mission.

It is unnecessary for me to tell you brethren that the Priesthood we hold is of two branches, the Aaronic and the Melchizedek, and we will ask the president of the Aaronic Priesthood, Bishop LeGrand Richards to come to speak to us now.

BISHOP LEGRAND RICHARDS

Presiding Bishop of the Church

Just as soon as I can get my breath I will start. Brother Ivins tells the story of a deacon who was called, extemporaneously, to speak in one of our stakes. He stood up a minute and switched from one foot to the other and said, "Brothers and sisters, I am just stalling for time." Then he preached a nice sermon on the Word of Wisdom. He then looked at them and said, "I have surely put myself on the spot, haven't I?"

DOES THE GOSPEL FIT?

Now brethren, I am happy to be here; I am happy in my work in the Church; I love the brethren, and I love the Saints. I have the privilege of interviewing a good many missionaries as I travel from stake to stake, and I always ask them how they feel about going on a mission and how the gospel fits them. I say, "When you go into a store to buy a suit of clothes, it either fits or it does not fit. Does the gospel fit you? How do you feel when you hear the Prophet Joseph Smith's story of having gone into the woods to pray, and having seen the Father and the Son and what transpired there? Can you accept all of that; do you believe it? Do you believe that John the Baptist came and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon Joseph and Oliver and that Peter, James, and John conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood? And that Elijah, Elias, and Moses brought the keys of their dispensations; does all that fit?" When they say it does, then I say: "Then you know that we do not have just another Church—we have the only true Church."

I feel that the most important thing in our teaching in this Church

is to try to impress upon our people the truth of the gospel, and I want to tell you from my experience that I do not think they have to be old men and old women to know the gospel is true. I have more young people at our conferences tell me they know the gospel is true, than the older ones, and I believe them.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter called the people to repentance and they were pricked in their hearts and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." And I know the promise is unto our children, and they can know the truth of the gospel through the gift of the Holy Ghost. I am not quite so much worried, sometimes, about the children as I am about the older folk.

EZEKIEL'S CONTRIBUTION

I attended a Sunday School class not very long ago, and they were considering the life and mission of the prophet, Ezekiel, and the brother in charge of the class proceeded to say that we did not know very much about Ezekiel. Then he told a little about the condition of the world at the time Ezekiel lived, but said nothing about his teachings or prophecies. He was about to close the class. I very seldom say anything in a Sunday School class when I am there, but I said, "Brother So-and-so, were you going to close right at that point?" He said, "I thought so, is there anything you would like to add?" I told the class that Ezekiel had made one contribution to this great Latter-day cause thousands of years ago, that no other prophet had made, for it was he who gave us the knowledge that there were two records to be kept, not only one of Judah and his posterity, but one of Joseph and his posterity, and save for Ezekiel we would not know that there was to be another volume of scripture, and I said that it seems to me we ought to capitalize on what Ezekiel left us.

MISSIONARY EXPERIENCES

It reminded me of when I was in the mission field in the Eastern States. Into one home I went, the man was not a member of the Church, and every time I would leave he would say, "I believe I have been a Mormon all my life, but did not know it;" but I could not get his wife to come in and listen to me. She would go into the next room and iron. You know ironing is a quiet job. I do not need to tell you that I usually take my "loud-speaker" along with me, just in case, and I made sure she heard all I had to say. The last visit I made there I said, "Mrs. McDonald, you would surely honor me if you would come in today and listen to me." She finally consented. I said, "You may never see me again in this world." We had just started our discussion and in walked her son from Harvard College. She said, "My boy, you are just in time. You take this book," because I had her take the Bible to follow me, "and you show

us how this man is trying to lead us astray." I took one hour and a half and I closed my Bible. The discussion that day was on the House of Israel, the new land the Lord had promised to Joseph, the ultimate final gathering in the latter days, and the two records to be kept; and I turned to her son from Harvard and said, "You tell your mother how I am trying to lead you astray, will you please?" He said, "Mother, this man is not trying to lead you astray, he is teaching you the truth." Before I left she said, "Mr. Richards, even if I do not believe all you say, there is something about you I cannot help but like. Will you pray with us before you go?"

In that same city we were holding a street meeting, and the Gospel Hall people were holding a convention a short distance away. They adjourned their meeting to come and try and break up ours. I said, "You men would like to be gentlemen, wouldn't you?" As I recall, there were about sixteen ministers there that night. I said, "You give us twenty minutes to finish our meeting and then we will stay thirty minutes and listen to you." I said to the crowd, "Won't we?" There were between two and three hundred there, and they indicated they would. During their thirty minutes they painted the Prophet Joseph as black as anybody could. "Why," they said, "if you would let them, the Mormons would bind the Book of Mormon in the same cover with the Bible and ask us to take it and like it." I did not like to see that meeting close right at that point, so I stepped up to this minister and said, "You would not mind if I made an announcement before the meeting closes, would you?" He said, "No, go ahead." So I turned to the crowd and said, "If you will come back next Tuesday night at 7:30 we will tell you why we bind the Book of Mormon in the same cover with the Bible and ask you to take it and like it." And I said, "Bring your Bibles along with you because you will not need them after next Tuesday night if you are not willing to accept the companion volume of scripture. Ezekiel said the Lord would bring forth the record of Joseph which He would join to the record of the Jews and the two should become one in His hand." When they came that night, and the crowd was larger than the previous one, I said, "How can any of us stay the hand of God from bringing forth the record He has promised?" As I remember we sold sixteen copies of the Book of Mormon that night.

Well, I have had so many experiences that I cannot understand why we cannot plant the truth in the hearts of our people until no outside thing or movement in the world can have any influence with them. We have so much more to offer than any other church in the world.

I was out tracting in that city one day and I had been to a particular house several times when the lady of the house said, "Mr. Richards, what are you trying to do anyway, are you trying to make Mormons out of all of us?" "Well," I said, "I will tell you one thing, I will never ask you to join the Mormon Church," and that seemed

to put her mind at ease. Then I said, "If I could show you where you could trade a dollar for five dollars, I would not have to ask you to do it, would I?" After I had been home a few months I received a letter from her calling me "Brother Richards." She said, "I decided to trade the dollar for five dollars. I was baptized a member of the Church last Friday night."

I think that any elder in Israel who cannot make Mormonism look better than five to one had better get hold of the scriptures and go to work and study the gospel.

I was in The Hague, Holland, and was invited into the home of the owner of a large furniture store. His associates were all business men. I cannot take the time to tell you how I got there, but I was there by invitation, and I was there to discuss a certain subject of the gospel—the universal salvation of man, including the work for the dead. This happened to be a Bible class and they spent a night each week studying together. They all had their Bibles and they turned the class over to me. After having discussed this subject for about an hour and a half, I closed my Bible and there wasn't anything said for a few minutes. Finally the daughter of the house turned to her father and said, "Father, I cannot understand; you always have the last word to say on everything and tonight you have not said a word." He said, "My daughter, there isn't anything to say. This man is teaching us things we have never heard of before and he is teaching them to us out of our own Bibles." And he did not have anything to say.

Well, why don't we teach these things to our children until they become like the Rock of Gibraltar, founded upon a faith that cannot be moved?

ETERNAL MARRIAGE

You take our principle of eternal marriage and the eternal duration of the marriage covenant. I have had similar experiences in teaching this principle. I spoke on this subject in Quitman, Georgia, and I took the statement from Brother Rulon Howells' book, "Do Men Believe What Their Church Prescribes?" and read what other churches prescribe on this subject. There is no church I have ever heard of that believes the marriage tie or the family unit will endure beyond the grave. We cannot imagine anybody being satisfied with a religion like that unless he is like the lady I met back in New Bedford. I tried to teach her this principle and she said, "I'll tell you, Mr. Richards, if there is any marriage relationship beyond the grave, I'll take chances on getting something better than I have now." (Laughter.) "If I live with my husband until I die, I think I will have done pretty well."

As I say, I spoke on this subject in Quitman, Georgia, and at the close of the meeting a Baptist minister came up and introduced himself and told me who he was. I said, "Did I misquote you," because I had read of the belief of the Baptist Church on this subject. He said, "No, Mr. Richards, it is just like you say, we do not all

believe all the things our churches prescribe." I said, "You do not believe it either. Why do you not go home and teach your people the truth. They will be glad to receive it from you, and they are not yet ready to accept it from the Mormon elders." That was all I could get out of him. He said, "I will see you again."

The next time I went to Quitman my picture appeared in the paper, because I was president of the mission, and when I went up to that little church he was waiting for me. I said, "I would be glad to know what you thought of my last sermon." He said, "Mr. Richards, I have been thinking about it ever since and I believe every word you said, only I would like to have heard the rest of it." You know I never quite get finished on a subject, the clock travels too fast. This principle is not difficult for even ministers to accept when you explain it to them.

I was at the Manti Temple recently with my father, and President Anderson, who is here tonight, told of a minister who had visited the temple grounds a few weeks ago. When he heard our story of our belief in eternal marriage and the eternal duration of the family unit he said, "You know, I had two of my young people come to me recently, and they wanted me to marry them for time and all eternity," and he said, "I did it. I thought that was the kind of marriage we all ought to have, but they do not teach it in their churches."

I spent an hour and a half in the study of one of the most prominent ministers in the United States. He died a few weeks ago, and at the time of his death he was chaplain of the United States Senate. While I was in his study we discussed this subject. He said, "Mr. Richards, our church does not give us any hope that there will be a continuation of the marriage tie or the family unit beyond this life, but in my heart I find stubborn objections." Then he used this illustration, and it was better than I could have given him. I have used it since, myself. He said, "When you take the kitten away from the cat, in a few days the cat has forgotten all about the kitten, and when you take the calf away from the cow, in a few days the cow has forgotten about its calf; but when you take the child away from its mother's bosom, though she lives to be a hundred years old, she never forgets the child of her bosom. I find it difficult to believe that God created love like that to perish in the grave." But he could not tell his people that from the pulpit because he could not hold his job and teach them Mormonism.

I want to tell you that we have so much more than any other church that five to one does not begin to show it. Why do we not get into the hearts of our boys and girls and our men and women so that no power under heaven will have the power to take them away from this Church.

God bless you in the great work you are doing, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.