

GENERAL PRIESTHOOD MEETING

The General Priesthood meeting of the Church convened in the Tabernacle at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, April 7, 1951.

President David O. McKay, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles presided and at President McKay's request Elder J. Reuben Clark, Jr., of the Council of the Twelve Apostles conducted the meeting.

Elder J. Reuben Clark, Jr.:

We will consider this just another session of the General Conference. Some of the brethren who are not accustomed to speaking on Priesthood night might get themselves in readiness.

The singing during this session will be by the Delta Phi (Returned Missionaries) Chorus from the Brigham Young University, Elder Ardean Watts, conductor, and Elder Roy M. Darley at the organ.

The opening song by the chorus will be: "See The Mighty Angel Flying."

Singing: "See The Mighty Angel Flying."

Opening prayer by President Vernal Willie of the North Box Elder Stake.

ELDER JOSEPH L. WIRTHLIN

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I sincerely trust, my brethren, that I may have an interest in your faith and prayers. I feel keenly the responsibility in addressing this great body of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

HOSPITALITY FOR WARD TEACHERS

Last night in our bishops' meeting, we discussed the great priesthood activity of ward teaching. There was one factor omitted that I should like to draw to your attention, and that is the manner of receiving the ward teachers in our homes. Reports have come to us that in many homes there is an attitude of indifference. Perhaps the radio is on, or the television, and the proper hospitality is not accorded the servants of the Lord.

We plead with you bishops, to admonish your people to receive these servants of God with kindness and consideration. I recall about two years ago of visiting the home of President J. Reuben Clark, and as I left, there was a humble man at the door. I heard the president say to him, "What can I do for you, my brother?" And he introduced himself as the ward teacher. I was deeply impressed by the degree

of hospitality that a member of the First Presidency extended to this humble man. I wish that all of us could have the same attitude and feeling towards these men that are sent to us as representatives of the bishop; extending to them the highest degree of cordiality, call the family in, and hearken and listen to their instructions.

About a week ago I was asked this question: Are the general authorities assigned subjects to discuss in general conference? My answer was "No." The individual who was asking the question said, "It seems rather odd that in all of the general conferences there is a definite theme discussed by the general authorities." And so during this great conference I could not help but observe that after Brother Romney gave his wonderful address pointing out the dangers and the feeling of insecurity, almost every speaker following him talked on that particular subject. And that subject is on my mind tonight.

SECURITY THROUGH THE GOSPEL

The other day a sixteen-year-old boy was heard to make this declaration, "I wonder what kind of a tomorrow there will be for me. When I am eighteen or nineteen, no doubt I will be drafted into the armed forces, which will mean a service of at least two years, and if there is war, it may mean an indefinite period of service." "And after that, if I'm lucky enough to come out, I want to go on a mission, and have four years at college. By the time I've done all of these things, I'll be twenty-seven or twenty-eight years of age." He seemed to express a spirit of frustration. He was down-hearted and discouraged because of an uncertain future.

I believe that we can so instruct our youth that regardless of what events transpire in the world's history, there will be in their hearts a feeling of security, security given to them through a testimony of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm sure that our youth will understand the gospel more fully if there is gospel instruction in the home, for has not the Lord declared:

And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion or in any of her stakes which are organized, and teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ, the son of the living God, and of baptism, and of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion or in any of her stakes which are organized. And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old and receive the laying on of hands. And they shall also teach their children to pray and to walk uprightly before the Lord.

INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN

I wonder when a child is approaching the age of eight, whether or not the head of the family, the father, he who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood, calls his child to his side and gives him some in-

struction with reference to having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, explaining to him what repentance means, the great significance of the baptismal ordinance, wherein having been baptized their sins are remitted, and the great significant fact that when they go into the waters of baptism, they are buried with the Christ in death, coming up out of the water is symbolical of His resurrection. I do not feel that these teachings are beyond the understanding of a child eight years old.

I am certain that a child of eight years of age will understand the significance of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. If a child has been properly taught and has a proper concept of the Godhead, he will know that there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in the Godhead. And this great spiritual being, called the Holy Ghost, can be so explained to a child that he will understand what the Holy Ghost is. And along with that, teach him that when the authorized servants of God lay their hands upon his head, that individual so laying his hands upon his head has the authority to do so—restored authority in these the last days. And through the imposition of hands and receiving the promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost, if that child is taught to live a sweet, clean life, the Holy Ghost will come and be his companion. I think he can understand that he will be led into the path of truth and light, that he will be blessed with a sense of perception which will give him the power to differentiate between that which is good and that which is evil. I think it would be an excellent practice to read to children the scripture wherein the Savior declared; found in John 14:16-17, including verse 26,

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter that he might abide with you forever, even the spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it seeketh him not, neither knoweth him. But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you, But the comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.

If children who are about to be baptized receive these instructions, they will understand the significance of them, creating a desire to live so fine the Spirit of Truth will come into their souls, giving them the assurance, yes, more than that, the testimony that their Heavenly Father lives and that the boy of Nazareth was his son, the Redeemer of the world; and that a fourteen-year-old boy who went into the woods asking for divine guidance, was visited by the Father and the Son, his prayers were answered, and they, too, can have their prayers answered. The Holy Ghost will give them a blessing of security as to the future and the eternities, that regardless of what events transpire, they will understand that their Heavenly Father rules over all for good.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Then there comes the time when worthy young men at the age of twelve receive the priesthood of God. I do not know of anyone who is better qualified to sit down with his son than a father and explain to him the great significance of the priesthood. Define priesthood: Point out to him that when he receives the priesthood of God, there is bestowed upon him Godly power that gives him the right to represent the Lord and to function in certain assignments when called upon to do so by those in authority. If these important lessons with relationship to the priesthood were taught to our sons, these young men would have a higher regard and respect for the priesthood.

Think if you will of the wonderful relationship in the home, when a father holding the Melchizedek Priesthood instructs his son in the ways of the priesthood who holds the lower or the Aaronic Priesthood. The Aaronic Priesthood is an appendage to the Melchizedek or the higher priesthood, just as a son is an appendage to his father. I feel that if in our homes fathers will take the time to teach these young men what the priesthood means—its significance, its powers, what is expected of them who hold it, it will contribute to the feeling of security that youth is seeking for. If fathers and mothers invite their sons and daughters to attend Sacrament Meeting with them, the sacrament meeting will become such a sacred, such a solemn, and such an impressive meeting that young people would not miss it. Partaking of the emblems of the Last Supper should be a source of inspiration and comfort to them, and the obligations they make with the Lord.

Young people should always feel impressed with the fact that Joseph Smith actually saw the Father and the Son just as plainly as I can see you. It had to be so for the world to know what our Heavenly Father is like and that Jesus Christ is his son.

Then, too, if as fathers and mothers, we are carrying out the mandate of the Lord wherein he has given us instructions to teach our youth the gospel, please invite our youth to attend fast meeting, teaching them first the significance of the fast offering principle, that they abstain from two meals, giving the equivalent in cash to a member of the Aaronic Priesthood who comes to collect it for the bishop, impressing upon them that their contribution will be used for those who are in distress.

FIRST GREAT COMMANDMENT

All during this conference, and particularly during the funeral of President Smith today, the first and great commandment was referred to many times—first, to love the Lord our God with all our might, and secondly to love our neighbor as ourself. Teach the youth of Israel to love their neighbors as themselves, then they must do something for that neighbor. Teach them that whatever they con-

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tribute in fast offerings is expressing a real love for the widow, for the aged, and for the orphan. Love, after all, is something that creates and demands service. It isn't lip service, but service that goes for the benefit and the good of someone else. Teaching our children to observe the fast offering principle, contributing to those who are in need, inviting them to attend fast meeting with the promise that if they will stand and bear witness that God lives and his goodness unto them, God will reward them with a testimony. The spirit of testimony only comes through the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost, and if they desire to experience the power of the Holy Ghost, the place to go to have that experience is in the fast meeting.

I am sure there isn't a young man or young woman that bears testimony to the divine existence of God, but what they feel in their souls something that is far above themselves, and it is a gift, the gift of the Holy Ghost. Brigham Young declared that no man can testify only through the power and the gift of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, so through observing the fast offering principle and attending fast meeting there will come to them spiritual rewards which will bud into a testimony.

IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

The Lord has admonished us to teach our children to pray. If they're not introduced to the Lord in the family circle of prayer, they will not know him. And knowing him not, they will not have faith. So, one of the first and most important lessons in every Latter-day Saint home should be teaching our children to pray. I am convinced that every spirit that leaves the presence of God and comes into mortality has a spark of faith in its heart. Hence the responsibility devolves upon the parents to so teach the children that the gospel spark will burst into a flame of faith. Having faith through prayer and obedience they will understand the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and let come what will, they will know that God lives, that he will be with them, bless them, and sustain them. And I know that any individual who has a testimony of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, as Brother Romney indicated yesterday, will have a feeling of security, will have a positive, affirmative feeling and not a negative one in spite of all the terrible events that are transpiring at this time.

If the young of Israel will live the gospel they will know what the old prophet Joel said would be a reality:

"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servants and upon the handmaidens in those days I will pour out my spirit."

And then again the Lord has said:

"Wherefore children shall grow up until they become old. Old men shall die but they shall not sleep in the dust, but they shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye."

PROMISES OF THE LORD

With a burning testimony in their hearts, there isn't any question but that the youth of Israel will accept the word of the Lord at its face value, and with the promises involved, why should they be down-cast, or why should they ask the question, "Will there be a tomorrow?" There will be a tomorrow for them, not only tomorrows of mortality but tomorrows of eternity, where they will enjoy every blessing that the Lord has promised the faithful, the loyal, and the devoted. For has not the Lord declared:

"And in that day the enmity of man and the enmity of beasts, yea the enmity of all flesh shall cease from before my face."

For in the day when enmity between man and beast and between man and man ceases, we shall have eternal peace.

And after we have taught our youth the gospel principles and in turn they have obeyed them, might they well feel as Paul declared to Timothy in II Timothy 1:7,

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Paul declared to the Corinthians, in I Corinthians 16:13:

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men. Be strong."

And the strong people will be the Saints of God, who have lived his word, and kept his commandments. Finally, when these young people stand upon the heights of their tomorrow, as Joshua stood upon the heights of the promised land and looking upon it for the first time, may our young men hear that sweet, small voice which said to him:

"Only be thou strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Eternal One is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

And in response to that voice, they will declare:

I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord, over mountain or plain
or sea,
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord
I'll be what you want me to be.

Fathers of Israel, teach your children the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in their childhood, and when they are old they will not depart therefrom, and may the feeling of security and testimony come into their hearts in the place of fear and doubt knowing the Lord lives and this is his work, which I humbly ask will be the blessing of every young man and woman in Israel, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.