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However, had the prodigal son repented earlier and regained his wealth and his birthright, he could then have returned to the father without being a servant. Likewise, if a man repents and restores his rights to the blessings, surely he shall receive all he has earned. "Repentance becomes more difficult as the sin is more willful; . . . as the time of repentance is procrastinated, the ability to repent grows weaker." (James E. Talmage.)

Alma tells us,

Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. (Alma 5:33.)

He says, "All men"; not just a few who are selected, but he says, "Repent, and I will receive you."

If you just stop and think of it, how wonderful the mercy of the Lord is. All manner of sin, except murder and blasphemy, can be forgiven through repentance. If we will try to do his will, his arm of mercy is outstretched toward us.

Not one of us is perfect now, but we are here to attain perfection. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) So as we overcome our weaknesses, and our sins, we grow and draw nearer our aim of perfection.

Let us not be so self-righteous that we think that we have no need for repentance, for the Savior himself preached repentance to the more righteous who were spared from the great destruction at the time of his crucifixion. At that time, on this hemisphere there was darkness for three days and great de-

struction; many cities and all their inhabitants were destroyed. Then the voice of the Lord was heard declaring that the more wicked had been destroyed, and the more righteous had been saved. To the righteous that were spared he declared as he might well say to us here today:

O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart. (3 Nephi 10:6.)

Then a warning—

But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers. (*Ibid.*, 10:7.)

Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me. (*Ibid.*, 9:14.)

And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with the Holy Ghost. . . .

Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore repent, and come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved. (*Ibid.*, 9:20-22.)

May the Lord's blessings be upon us, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

### *Of the First Council of the Seventy*

**M**AY I INVITE your attention to a comparison between the Church of Jesus Christ, as it was organized and perfected in New Testament times, and the self-styled Christian churches that exist

in the world today? In order to do so I shall take the liberty of raising a number of queries, and shall assume that each of us has a sufficient working knowledge of the New Testament to recognize the basis upon which each query rests.

Where in the world today will we find a church that has as its official title some combination of the names of Christ, according to the New Testament pattern?

Where is there a church whose ministers claim divine authority in the real, complete, and actual sense that it was claimed by the ministers among the primitive Saints?

Where is there a church which claims the Melchizedek and Aaronic orders of the priesthood as these were had anciently?

Where is there a church in which we will find the ordinances practised that were practised among the primitive Saints?

Where do we find baptism by immersion for the remission of sins performed under the hands of a legal administrator?

Where do we find a people who lay hands on the head of every baptized convert for the present bestowal of the Holy Ghost; or who, when there are sick among them, call in the elders of the church, that they may anoint them with oil and pray over them, that the prayer of faith may heal the sick and God may raise them up?

Where is there a people that has the New Testament ordinance of baptism for the dead?

Where is there a church that has the same organization that existed among the primitive Saints, that has Apostles and prophets, pastors, evangelists, and all the rest?

Where is there a people that believes that there should be Twelve Apostles holding the keys of the kingdom, presiding over and directing all of the affairs of the Church and kingdom, and that such group should continue until there is a unity of the faith?

Where is there a church that believes that God has set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of the spirit, healings, tongues, helps, and governments?

Where is there a church that professes to have all of the doctrines that

were taught in New Testament times; that believes that God our heavenly Father is a personal being, in whose image man is created; that has an understanding that Jesus Christ is his Only Begotten Son and is a Being in the express image of the person of the Father?

Where is there a people that has a real, intelligent, and scriptural understanding of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that knows that because of that transcendent act all men will be raised in immortality and those who have believed and obeyed the gospel law, both in immortality and unto eternal life?

Where is there a people that knows that the plan of salvation, based on the atoning sacrifice of Christ, consists in having faith in Christ, in repenting of one's sins, in being baptized under the hands of a legal administrator, in receiving the gift and guidance of the Holy Spirit, and then in enduring in righteousness unto the end?

Where is there a church that believes that the gospel is preached to those in the spirit world, that they may live according to God in the spirit, and be judged according to men in the flesh?

Where is there a people that believes in the literal resurrection from the grave, in the fact that all men will stand before the judgment bar of Christ, and having been judged according to the deeds done in the flesh, will be awarded a place in a kingdom of glory, in either a telestial, a terrestrial, or a celestial kingdom?

Where is there a people that believes that between the first and second comings of Christ, there was to be a complete, total, universal falling away from the faith once delivered to the Saints?

Where is there a people that believes that in the last days there was to be an era of restoration, a time of restitution, in which God would give again all things that he had spoken by the mouths of all his holy prophets since the world began?

Where is there a people that believes

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that this restoration of the gospel was to be effected by angelic ministrations, and that the gospel so restored was then to be carried to all the peoples of the earth?

Where is there a people that believes that in a day subsequent to New Testament times, the kingdom was to be restored to Israel and the scattered remnants of that people gathered back to the lands of their inheritance?

Where is there a people that actually believes that signs will follow those who accept and obey the gospel law, that professes to have among the membership of the church the working of miracles, the ministering of angels, the gifts of the Spirit, and all of the powers and graces that were had anciently?

Now we might multiply questions on all of these matters, but I submit to you that every essential, identifying characteristic of the New Testament Church can, with intelligence and propriety, be outlined under one of these six heads: name, authority, ordinances, organization, doctrines, and gifts of the Spirit. And I submit to you further that there is only one Church in all the world that so much as claims to have every essential identifying characteristic of the Church organized and perfected by Christ and his Apostles anciently, and

that one Church is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Now, may I say by way both of testimony and of doctrine, that you and I are living in the era of restoration. We are living in the times of restitution. The heavens are no longer sealed. The voice of God is heard again. The kingdom is established on earth, and that kingdom is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and it has again every grace and right, power, privilege, and authority that the Almighty ever gave to the Saints in primitive times.

And now we are nearing the end of the world. The time is not far distant when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and if you and I live worthily and walk as most of us already know we should, we will be entitled to receive an eternal inheritance in his eternal world.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the First Council of Seventy, has just concluded speaking. We shall now hear from Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, Assistant to the Twelve, and he will be followed by Elder Clifford E. Young.

## ELDER ELRAY L. CHRISTIANSEN

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*



HAVE always enjoyed listening to that beautiful little song, "The Prayer Perfect," and I am thinking just now of the last few words in that song:

And with all the needy, O divide, I pray.

This vast treasure of content that is mine today.

As we sit here, brothers and sisters, we are blessed with vast treasures of content, knowing full well and having the assurance that God lives, and that this is his Church and kingdom; know-

ing that if we will keep the commandments of the Lord, that we may go back into his presence; that we may reach out and bring our loved ones and our friends this same blessing. This brings a great measure of contentment. But we must not rest contented, for the Lord has placed upon our shoulders the responsibility, not only of perfecting our own lives, but also of teaching to all the world this gospel. That has been emphasized in this conference. In addition to that, he has given us the responsibility of identifying our dead kindred, of placing their names in the