

ELDER ELDRED G. SMITH

Patriarch to the Church

Jesus said to Nicodemus, “. . . Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

“Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3-5.)

Jesus confirmed this principle himself in his own baptism as is recorded in Matthew:

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

“But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

“And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.” (Matt. 3:13-15.)

If baptism were so necessary for Jesus, who was a perfect man, without sin, the very Son of God, to fulfil all righteousness, then how much more necessary must it be for all others to receive baptism. Then, too, if the Lord requires baptism to see or enter into the kingdom of God, then the Lord is obligated to provide a plan or way whereby all mankind may receive this important ordinance.

You recall that after the Savior’s crucifixion and before his resurrection, he was preaching to the spirits in prison, as is recorded in First Peter. This opens the way for those who do not have the opportunity in this life of hearing the gospel and accepting baptism to accept its teachings after death. This does not provide the ordinance of baptism. If the plan were to stop here without provision for the actual baptism, all the efforts of Jesus in the spirit world would be in vain. This must be done on earth.

The next step in a plan of justice would call for records on the earth to identify those who lived and died without the gospel. The Lord has inspired people throughout the ages to preserve

records. Many great national leaders have made great efforts to preserve vital records. Man has inherently made and preserved records. One of the inherent traits of the Israelites is that they are a record-keeping people. Members and nonmembers alike are obligated to gather family records.

On April 3, 1836 in the Kirtland Temple, Elijah the prophet appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and bestowed upon them the keys of the sealing power of the priesthood. This is the power and authority to fulfil all the sealing ordinances of the gospel, including baptism, for both the living and the dead.

Referring to the mission of Elijah, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelations, ordinances, oracles, powers, and endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God. . . .” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 337.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith also said, and I quote: “The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead. The Apostle [Paul] says, ‘They without us cannot [sic] be made perfect;’ (See Heb. 11:40) for it is necessary that the sealing power should be in our hands to seal our children and our dead for the fulness of the dispensation of times—a dispensation to meet the promises made by Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world for the salvation of man.

“. . . I will meet Paul half way. I say to you, Paul, you cannot be perfect without us. It is necessary that those who are going before and those who come after us should have salvation in common with us; and thus hath God made it obligatory upon man. Hence, God said, ‘I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to

Saturday, April 7

Second Day

the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” (Mal. 4:5-6, *ibid.*, p. 356.)

The Lord does not stop here. The teaching in the spirit world has continued since the crucifixion of Christ. This means many are accepting the teachings all the time. Their descendants are found in all the nations of the earth. To assist those who have accepted the gospel in the spirit world, the Lord has reserved many valiant spirits to come forth in this generation. Just as the family of the Prophet Joseph Smith was moved from place to place until they settled in the area where the plates had lain buried for many centuries, the Lord has reserved special, valiant spirits who in the pre-existence were so strong that the Lord knew they would accept the gospel when they heard it.

We hear glowing reports of the progress in the missionary work. These are some of these special spirits to come forth in special families, away from the center stakes of Zion, with a special mission to be a saving power to their ancestors.

It is common for members in these newly organized stakes in the missions to be the only ones in their family to join the Church. A husband and wife may be the only members of the Church on each side of their families. They alone are responsible for all their family research.

Many times people want to come to Utah to do temple work. This is a noble thought, but I caution all of you who contemplate any move, do not fail first to gather together all your family records available in the area where you now live. So many members have come from England or Germany or Holland or other nations to go to the temple just to find that they have to return or send back to get their family records, which they should have brought with them in the first place.

I hear many say that their genealogy is all done. If this were so, the rest of us would have ours all done. Go back ten generations on your pedigree charts, and you will have 1,024 lines to follow. Each generation doubles the number

of lines. If all the members in the Church were to complete all their family lines back for ten generations, it would take them about to the beginning of the seventeenth century. This should be possible for most members of the Church. I think there are few families, if any, who have this much done.

Too often we think as we get older and have more time we will devote ourselves to research. Too often that time never comes. Procrastination is the devil's tool.

The story is told that as Christianity was becoming more widespread on the earth, Satan gathered his hosts together and called for suggestions to combat this danger to their dominion on the earth. The first volunteer said, "Send me. I will tell them it is not true." Satan said, "No, that is not good enough." The second volunteer said, "Send me. I will tell them part of it is true, but most of it is false." "No," Satan said, "That is not good enough." The third volunteer said, "Send me. I will tell them that it is all true, but there is no hurry." "Go," Satan said, "that will get them every time."

Genealogy is not alone for the old but for the young as well. Young minds are keen and alert and resourceful, all of which is needed for research. Man should be busy with this family research.

To be exalted in the kingdom of God, one must keep all the laws of the gospel and keep all the commandments of God. It is great to keep the Word of Wisdom and to pay your tithes and offerings and attend Sacrament meetings and fulfil all the other activities in the Church. But if you omit your family research and temple work, you fall short and at the peril of your own salvation.

This is a priesthood responsibility which means that the priesthood is to see that it gets done. So the women usually do most of the work. This is another vital and important way to magnify your priesthood, as Brother Romney urged us yesterday. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 356.)

I testify to you that this is truly the

work of the Lord, it is a very vital work that needs to be done, and I testify that this is true, that the gospel is true, and that the Lord will help us if we will be diligent to do what he wants us to do.

I pray the blessings of the Lord upon all who diligently seek after their dead and who are diligent in all of the responsibilities given to them in the

Church, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Eldred G. Smith, Presiding Patriarch of the Church, has just concluded speaking, Elder Thorpe B. Isaacson, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us.

ELDER THORPE B. ISAACSON

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

President McKay, President Moyle, President Brown, my dear brothers and sisters: This is a great sight. Someone has said he wishes that every one of you could stand here for a moment. It would make a better Christian out of you. I sincerely pray that what I shall say will be helpful to someone, especially those who may have troubles, or those who may have problems, or who may have sorrows. There are so many troubles and so much sorrow in the world.

This is a great chorus today. We have surely enjoyed it, coming from a great institution [Ricks College]. I am sure we all miss Brother Stapley, Brother Morris, Brother Hunter, Brother McConkie, and Brother Hanks, but they know that they have our prayers.

Fasting and prayer and the contribution of an honest fast offering have given us some concern recently. I desire to speak on those two very closely related subjects today.

Fasting consists in the complete abstinence from food and drink. Fasting, with prayer, its companion, is designed to increase spirituality, to foster a spirit of devotion and a love of God, to increase faith in the hearts of men, thus assuring divine favor; to encourage humility and contrition of soul; to aid in the acquirement of righteousness; and to teach man his nothingness and dependence upon God; and to hasten along the path of salvation those who properly comply with this law of fasting.

There are many specific reasons for fasting recorded in the scriptures. It is a general obligation imposed by revelation upon Church members. It is in

itself a form of true worship of God. In 1832 the Lord gave a revelation to the Prophet Joseph, when he stated: ". . . I give unto you a commandment that ye continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth." (D&C 88:76.)

But this was not the beginning of fasting. The law is as old as man. In 1932 President Joseph Fielding Smith stated: ". . . if we had the records before us, we would discover that fasting was introduced by revelation to man in the dawn of history." (*Deseret News*, August 13, 1932, p. 5.)

The late President Joseph F. Smith, commenting on the law of fasting and the payment of an honest fast offering, stated: "It is, therefore, incumbent upon every Latter-day Saint to give to his bishop, on fast day, the food [or its equivalent], that he and his family would consume for the day, that it may be given to the poor for their benefit and blessing; or, in lieu of the food, that its equivalent [value or] amount, or if the person is wealthy, a liberal donation in money, be so reserved and dedicated to the poor." (*Gospel Doctrine*, p. 243.)

Is it proper to fast for the sick? I quote from 2 Samuel: "David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth." (2 Samuel 12:16.)

Is it proper to fast for a special blessing? I wonder if everyone of us doesn't need a special blessing? If I may be forgiven right here, I think I should like to tell you that Thursday morning in the temple in an upper room, all of the General Authorities met there in fasting and prayer. President McKay talked to