

Sunday, April 8

Third Day

Constitution and the writings of the founding fathers.

Yes, we must protect the Lord's base of operations by moving away from unsound economic policies which encourage creeping socialism and its companion, insidious, atheistic communism. If we are to protect this important base, we must as a nation live within our means, balance our budgets, and pay our debts. We must establish sound monetary policies and take needed steps to compete in world markets.

If we are to protect this American base, we must realize that all things, including information disseminated by our schools, churches, and government, should be judged according to the words of the prophets, especially the living prophet. This procedure coupled with the understanding which will come through the Spirit of the Lord, if we are living in compliance with the scriptures, is the only sure foundation and basis of judgment. Any other course of action leaves us muddled, despondent, wandering in shades of gray, easy targets for Satan.

We must not fail in these pressing and important matters. We must not fall short of the great mission the Lord

has proffered and outlined for America and for his divinely restored Church.

Yes, this is a choice land—a nation with a prophetic history.

God bless America and her leaders, and all the free world. And may God protect his latter-day base of operation that his glorious message of salvation may go forth to all the world, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Ezra Taft Benson, a member of the Council of the Twelve, has just spoken. The Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "Lord Now Victorious."

The Tabernacle Choir sang the anthem, "Lord Now Victorious."

President David O. McKay:

You have listened to Elder Ezra Taft Benson, one of the members of the Twelve. President Hugh B. Brown, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will now be our concluding speaker.

PRESIDENT HUGH B. BROWN

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

I pray for divine guidance as I humbly undertake to speak to this vast audience. May the Holy Spirit dictate what is said, and then it will be the truth, and may that same Spirit, which is the Spirit of truth, accompany the spoken word to our edification and blessing.

A brief explanation of our interpretation and acceptance of the most fundamental of all Christian doctrines may assist both friends and members to answer the recurring question: Are the Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, Christians?

We might with profit, and we hope with some interest, consider the question: What does it mean to be a Christian? The dictionary defines a Christian as one who follows the precepts and example of Jesus Christ, or one whose

life is conformed to the doctrines of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now we cannot, of course, this morning discuss, nor could we hardly enumerate the various saving principles of the gospel of Christ, but there is one doctrinal event which foreshadows and overshadows all other Christian doctrine. I refer to the atonement of Christ, and it would seem that this would be appropriate, as we approach the Easter time. "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel." (Third Article of Faith.)

Faith in this one transcendent event, the most important in all history, is the enduring foundation upon which the true Christian gospel is built. Upon it,

the salvation of the whole human family depends. He who understands and accepts the full significance of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ and conforms to the principles and ordinances which that acceptance enjoins may be properly classified as a Christian. But there must be more than mere lip service; faith alone is not sufficient.

Jesus said: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7:20-21.)

What must one do to become a Christian or to be saved is an ancient and oft-repeated question which was answered by Peter, the apostle, on the day of Pentecost, when through his powerful sermon the people were convinced and pricked in their hearts and cried out: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and the apostle said, ". . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38.)

Forgiveness on terms of repentance is a basic Christian principle. But is one saved by merely meeting these preliminary requirements? The Apostle Paul, in one of his dynamic letters, said, speaking of these principles: ". . . let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God," (Hebrews 6:1.)

And he adds that the work of perfecting the Saints (the people of the Church in former days were known as Saints) must continue "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" (Ephesians 4:13.)

Salvation is a continuing, on-going process. It is eternally improving, achieving, becoming—yes, and overcoming. In some ways it may be analogous to education, which is a continuous process of overcoming ignorance. When is a man educated? When is a man saved? We believe a man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge for

"the glory of God is intelligence." (See D&C 93:36.)

Is a man educated when he enrolls in college, or when he gets his bachelor's, his master's or doctorate? Yes, relatively, he is an educated man, but he still has a lifetime—an eternity, in fact, in which to pursue knowledge and truth. The highest reaches of life are but embryonic in the light of eternity, and man has every reason to hope that a future life will afford him full scope for larger and fuller achievement.

This Church, which bears Christ's name, has from the beginning uniformly taught that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first saving principle of the gospel, but as the poet tells us, "Heaven is not gained by a single bound, but we build the ladders by which we rise, from the lowly earth to the vaulted skies, and mount to its summit round by round."

Faith must be confirmed and demonstrated by active acceptance of all the other principles and ordinances taught by him whose name is incorporated in the word Christian.

We do not claim to understand fully the atonement in all of its limitless scope and infinite blessing; but God has revealed enough detail concerning the need, purpose, and universal application of the atonement of Christ to justify the doctrine that the resurrection from the dead is assured to all men.

John said: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Rev. 20:12.)

Eternal life and exaltation, however, made possible by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ may be progressively attained by man's voluntary co-operation with divine will and purpose. When we think of any reconciliation or appeasement or settlement, we consider it in connection with some previous act or event of which it is a sequel. For instance, a treaty of peace is a sequel of war. A settlement of a claim or an obligation implies there has been an account with a debit balance. When we speak of the atonement wrought by

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Jesus Christ, we envision an unpaid debt, and antecedent transgression; something to atone for.

All students of the Bible who accept the New Testament see in his atonement a sequel to the transgression of Adam, generally known as the Fall of Adam. Through the Fall, Adam and Eve and all their posterity became subject to bodily disintegration and death and also to banishment from the presence of God, which is in the nature of spiritual death, and this despite the fact that the cause was individual transgression. By the individual atonement of Christ, free redemption from the transgression of Adam is assured to all. Paul assures us that: ". . . since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:21-22.)

The transgression of Adam, together with all of its consequences, was foreseen and the expiation provided for before the foundations of the world were laid. In that primeval council, of which the scriptures speak, when "all the sons of God shouted for joy" (see Job 38:7), Christ offered himself as a ransom. He was not coerced or required to make this sacrifice. His free agency was in no way infringed or trammled. It was a freewill, love-inspired offer, which could have been withdrawn at any time. It was optional until the very time of his crucifixion. He gently rebuked Peter, you remember, who would have defended him with a sword at the time of the betrayal, and Jesus said: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53.)

The question is sometimes asked: Why was such a sacrifice of God's beloved Son permitted or accepted? Why not let someone else pay that debt? Why not Adam?

The answer is found in the fact that of all the sons of God, only Christ could qualify, because he was the only sinless man who ever walked the earth. Furthermore, he was the First Begotten, the eldest of the sons of God in the spirit, and the Only Begotten in the

flesh, and therefore the only one who possessed the full powers of Godhood and manhood. Hear him refer to that premortal existence in the most beautiful prayer on record, found in the 17th chapter of John; he prayed: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5.)

Christ was the only one wholly free from the dominion of Satan, the only one possessed of power to hold death in abeyance and to die only as he willed so to do, the only one who could conquer death. He said: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;" (John 5:26.)

And again: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. . . ." (John 10:17-18.)

Another question is sometimes heard: Why should Christ have volunteered to make this sacrifice? What was the motive that inspired and sustained him from the time of that council in heaven until the moment of his agonized cry, "It is finished"? (John 19:30.)

The answer to this question is twofold: first, his undeviating devotion to his Father's will. He said: ". . . My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (*Ibid.*, 4:34.)

Second was his supernal and all-embracing love for mankind, who, without his mediation, would have remained in the total gloom of desiring without hope throughout eternity.

As the late President Taylor very beautifully and very truthfully said, speaking of the atonement: "Is justice dishonored? No; it is satisfied, the debt is paid. Is righteousness departed from? No; this is a righteous act. All requirements are met. Is judgment violated? No; its demands are fulfilled. Is mercy triumphant? No; she simply claims her own. Justice, judgment, mercy and truth all harmonize as the attributes of Deity. Justice and truth have met together, righteousness and

peace have kissed each other.' Justice and judgment triumph as well as mercy and peace." (*The Mediation and Atonement*, 1950 edition, p. 167.)

What was the alternative to the atonement? What if there had been no atonement? If there had been no atonement, all men would have been doomed to eternal death, for unless Christ had broken its bonds, death would have been victorious. All who died before the Meridian of Time were still in their graves when Christ came forth triumphantly from the tomb and broke the bonds that held them captive.

Matthew records that: ". . . the graves were opened; and many bodies of the Saints which slept arose,

"And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Matthew 27:52-53.)

Thus he became the first fruits of them that slept. When the Apostle Paul comprehended the full meaning of this unprecedented event, he joyfully exclaimed: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55.)

And Jesus comforted and reassured all the grieving Marthas of the world with these immortal words: ". . . I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. . . ." (John 11:25-26.)

But the victory over death is not the only benefit arising from the atonement of the Messiah; his atonement not only liberated all men from eternal death but, through the atonement, forgiveness of our individual sins may be obtained. He made it possible for us, through faith, repentance, and continued righteousness, to obtain absolution from the effects of personal sins. One does not get the full benefit of the atonement simply by acknowledging it.

Men cannot be saved in their sins because, by divine decree, no unclean thing can enter the kingdom of heaven; however, through repentance, baptism, and the power of the Holy Ghost, men may be saved from their sins.

No man can by one single act, how-

ever great or sincere, free himself from the necessity for that "patient continuance in well doing" of which Paul speaks. He must still follow the Master and endure to the end. Jesus plainly and impressively taught this truth to the young man who came to him saying:

". . . Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

"And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

"He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

"Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

"Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." (Matthew 19:16-21.)

It is not enough therefore merely to keep the commandments or obey the law nor even to sell all and give to the poor. The final requirement is to follow the Master. The poet has us sing:

"Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow thee;

"Naked, poor, despised, forsaken, thou from hence my all shall be.

"Perish every fond ambition, all I've thought, or hoped, or known;

"Yet how rich is my condition, God and Heaven are still my own!"

That all men are sinners in varying degrees is repeatedly affirmed in the New Testament. Paul wrote to the Romans: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Romans 3:23.)

And John adds: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8.)

Peter said: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

"And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

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"And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

"For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-8.)

That the blessings of the atonement are to be made available not only to all who lived before the time of Christ but also to all who die without an opportunity to hear the gospel is evidenced by Peter's declaration: "For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Peter 4:6.)

The Savior himself confirms this as follows: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." (John 5:25.)

In answer to the question then, what does it mean to be a Christian and are we Christians, we reply that the doctrines we teach are Christian by every test of the scripture and of revelation. In practice we confess we often fall short. However, we are earnestly trying to bring our lives into complete harmony with his laws and thus become entitled to the full blessings of the atonement and become progressively better Christians.

No one of us is justified in praying as did the Pharisee of old, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men. . . ." (Luke 18:11.) There is no room in the true Christian life for an attitude of "holier than thou." Each one who claims to be a Christian could with better grace pray as did the publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." (*Ibid.*, 18:13.)

Humbly we bear witness that God is a reality; he is personal and is our Father; that Jesus of Nazareth is the Redeemer and Savior of the world; that

the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored to the earth; and we wish all men could hear and accept that message.

As Peter said in answer to the Savior's question, "Whom say ye that I am?" we say with him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (See Matt. 16:15-16.) May God be with you till we meet again. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We shall conclude this session of the 132nd Annual Conference of the Church with the Tabernacle Choir singing, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again." Following the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder James I. Gibson, president of the Lake Mead Stake. This Conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

We express our deep appreciation to the owners and managers of the many television and radio stations who have offered their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this Conference available to the many million persons throughout North America, South America, Europe, and many other areas of the world.

The Choir will now sing, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again," and the Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir will sing, "The Lord Bless You and Keep You."

The Choir and Congregation joined in singing the hymn, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again," following which the Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir sang, "The Lord Bless You And Keep You."

The closing prayer was offered by Elder James I. Gibson, president of the Lake Mead Stake.

Conference adjourned until 2:00 p.m.

THIRD DAY AFTERNOON MEETING

The concluding session of the Conference was held in the Tabernacle at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, April 8.

The choral music for this session of the Conference was furnished by the Tabernacle Choir, with Richard P.