

The Choir sang the hymn, "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," following which the invocation was offered by Elder Paul C. Child, formerly President of the North Central States Mission.

President David O. McKay:

Brother Paul C. Child, formerly president of the North Central States Mission, offered the invocation.

The Choir will now sing "The Palms." You recognize that you are on the air. Proceedings are being conducted on the minute so the new channels that are coming in will hear the

beginning of each sermon and the songs.

We thank the Mayor of Los Angeles, members of our own government, senators, congressmen, mayors of cities, and all the visitors who have cooperated here with us by participating in this audience of several million people this morning.

An anthem, "The Palms," was sung by the Choir.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve, will be our first speaker.

ELDER STERLING W. SILL

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Many years ago someone published a picture Bible in which it was attempted to make the great scriptural messages more memorable, by presenting them in visual form. Our natural tendency is to see things more clearly when they are presented in pictures. Mere ideas are often too abstract for the mind to deal with effectively.

One of the visual portrayals in this interesting Bible was a colored picture of the ascension. It showed the Resurrected Jesus standing in the air above the Mount of Olives as he was ascending to his Father. And standing slightly below the master were two angels dressed in white clothing. Over the years I have drawn great strength from the thrilling ideas represented by this picture. Christ's ascension to heaven marked the end of an important period. He had finished one part of the work assigned to him in the grand council of heaven. He had organized the Church and had left ordained apostles to carry on its work. He had taught them the doctrines of salvation and had given them the priesthood, with the power to bind in heaven what they did on earth. He had shed his own blood to pay the penalty of our sins. Then in the last words spoken just before his ascension, Jesus said to the Twelve "... ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and

unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8.)

The ascension picture is completed by the interesting scriptural statement which said, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

"And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

"Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (*Ibid.*, 1:9-11.)

During World War II, I added another impressive mental picture to my collection. This one shows General Douglas MacArthur about to take flight from Corregidor under the military pressure of Japanese conquest. To those who were forced to remain behind, General MacArthur said, "I shall return." I like to imagine the hope that this promise must have brought to the people of the Philippines during those long months in which they awaited their liberation from the bondage of the Japanese. They knew that MacArthur would not forget. They knew that just as soon as possible he would come back to set them free and punish their oppressors. His promise may have had

more than ordinary significance to me, inasmuch as some of the members of my own family were among those awaiting MacArthur's return. They hid in the hills until they were captured and sent to a Japanese concentration camp in Manila.

The general's promise to return must have had a disturbing significance for the invaders themselves, for they must have known that MacArthur would never rest until they had been driven from the islands or annihilated during their resistance. This "I shall return" picture was given its happy ending some two years later when the general's promise was finally and fully kept.

However, the world still awaits this more significant "I shall return" promise that had been made some nineteen hundred years earlier from above the Mount of Olives. It is very important to remember that the Savior of the world was only bidding the earth and its people a temporary farewell. Many times before his death, he himself had foretold his own glorious second coming to judge the world.

On that last Tuesday before his death on Friday, Jesus had been teaching his followers about his second coming. Near the end of the day he left the temple and led the Twelve across the Mount of Olives. As he sat down to rest near the summit, his disciples said to him, ". . . Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3.) Then Jesus told them of the wars and contentions that should characterize the last days, and as one of the important signs that should precede his second coming, he said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (*Ibid.*, 24:14.)

As the people of the Philippines awaited their liberation, they probably wondered whether or not General MacArthur had the ability to fulfil the conditions involved in his promise to return. There are also a great many in our world who discount both the possibility and the probability of the second coming of Christ. Yet we may be certain that God's program has never been

abandoned and will not be forgotten.

In those last sad hours just prior to his death, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again*, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:1-3. Italics added.) What a thrilling, frightening thought when we understand the conditions under which he will come again. And what tremendous consequences are involved in the message of ascension day. As the Resurrected Son of God stood there between the heavens and the earth, holy angels from God's presence made a firm promise, that he would personally return. The angels said, ". . . this same Jesus, . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go. . ." (Acts 1:11.)

Since ascension day, some nineteen wide centuries have come and gone, and many important events have taken place. According to tradition with one exception, the apostles that Jesus appointed to carry on his work, were all subjected to violent deaths. Peter, Philip, Simon, and Andrew were crucified; James and Paul were beheaded; Bartholomew was flayed alive; Thomas was run through with a lance; James, the son of Alphaeus, was beaten to death; Thaddaeus was shot through with arrows; Barnabas was stoned; Matthew was slain with a battle axe in Ethiopia; and Mark was dragged to death in the streets of Alexandria. Then John, the sole survivor, was banished to the lonely isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. Jesus had built his Church upon the foundation of apostles and prophets. When the foundation was destroyed, the building crumbled. In time what had once been a divine organization became merely a human institution. Many of the Christian doctrines were misinterpreted; the ordinances were changed; the authority was lost; the apostasy grew; and the world slipped gradually into the long black night of the Dark Ages.

Saturday, April 6

Then some said that the heavens were forever sealed, that the canon of scripture was full, and that no voice from God would ever again be heard upon the earth. The spirit of those who crucified Christ, destroyed his organization, and disbelieved his doctrines, still have a numerous following among us.

One of the most serious problems of our present world is that there are so many people who disbelieve in a Supreme Being. To some, man is the highest authority and the greatest intelligence in the universe. Others believe that God has gone out of business and that the last words that we will ever hear from the Savior of the world were spoken at the ninth hour of that awful Friday afternoon, when from Calvary's cross the dying Christ said, "It is finished." The last memory that some have of their Redeemer pictures him hanging upon the cross. Recently the world has been flooded with the crucifix, but Jesus did not remain upon the cross. Some remember him lying in the garden tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but Jesus did not remain in the tomb. Nothing in the scriptures could be plainer than the fact that the life of Christ did not begin in Bethlehem, neither did it end on Calvary. He said, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." (John 16:28.) In his prayer in Gethsemane while contemplating his own death, he said, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (*Ibid.*, 17:5.)

Long before our earth was created, Jesus lived and ruled with his Father as a part of the presidency of the universe. Under the direction of the Father, he was the Creator of the earth. In the first chapter of Genesis, God is recorded as saying, ". . . Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: . . ." (Gen. 1:26. Italics added.) The use of these plural pronouns indicates that the Son also took part in the creation. But even then he was no novice as a Creator. In one of the great revelations given to Moses and revealed anew in the latter days, God said, "And worlds without number have I created; . . . and

by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten." (Moses 2:33.)

We think of greatness partly in terms of what it has already accomplished and partly in terms of what it promises for the future. As I rerun my mental picture of ascension day, I like to think of the Redeemer in terms of his tremendous background. Not only had he created worlds without number, but in his pre-mortal existence he was that magnificent personage of great authority and power known in the scriptures as Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was the first Begotten Son of God in the spirit and was chosen to be the Savior of the world because he was the best qualified for that important calling. Then as a part of his own progression, he took upon himself a body of flesh and bones, and became the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh. There are some who discount the value of a body so far as eternity is concerned. There are those who in their teachings seek to deprive God of his body. Many do not believe in their own resurrection. But next to the human spirit the human body is the most marvelous of God's creations. If the body was not necessary, God would never have created it in the first place. If it was not necessary for eternity, God would never have instituted the resurrection. If a body was not necessary for God the Father, certainly there would have been no reason why God the Son should have been resurrected. The spirit and the body inseparably connected constitutes the soul. The spirit can never be perfect without the body. There can never be a fulness of joy until the spirit and the body are inseparably joined together.

The Resurrected, Glorified Jesus, like Elohim, his Eternal Father, has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's. (See D&C 130:22.) When Jesus appeared to the eleven after his resurrection, they were frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit. Jesus corrected them by saying, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke 24:39.) Jesus did not lose his body after his resurrection. In some mysterious way it did not evaporate,

neither did it expand to fill the immensity of space. Jesus had his body as he ascended to his Father from the Mount of Olives, and the record is perfectly clear that he will still have that same body when he comes in glory to judge the world.

In addition to the information given in the Bible, we now have some new evidence of universal importance which has been given to the world on this subject in our own day. In the early spring of 1820, in upper New York state, God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ reappeared upon the earth to re-establish among men a belief in the God of Genesis, a belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and a belief in the God of Mount Olivet. The Prophet Joseph Smith describes his part of this experience by saying, "... I saw two personages whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith 2:17.) Then there followed the great message of the restoration.

The same Jesus who healed the sick and walked upon the waves has spoken again in our day and has reaffirmed the fact that he is still interested in our success. The same Jesus said to his disciples, "... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15-16.) This same Jesus has informed us anew that he has not changed his mind about the importance of this and the other great Christian doctrines.

The same Jesus who upon the Mount of Olives said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come," has, under the direction of his Father, restored *that* gospel, in preparation for *that* day. He himself looked forward to that day saying, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." (Matt. 16:27.) What a tremendous day that will be. That is also

the day foretold by Malachi who said, "For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." (Joseph Smith 2:37.) That tremendous event is fast approaching, and we must work while it is called today, for the night cometh, wherein no man can work.

I would like to bear to you my personal witness that God has not gone out of business, that the heavens are not sealed, that the Redeemer of man has not forgotten his promises, nor is he any less interested in our welfare now than when in Gethsemane and upon Mount Calvary he suffered for our sins. And to close, I would again like to take you out to the sacred top of the Mount of Olives, and again hear the angels say, "... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11.) May God help us to be ready for that important event I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve.

The Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir will favor us with "Seek Thy God."

The Men's Chorus of the Tabernacle Choir sang "Seek Thy God."

President David O. McKay:

We welcome all those who have just joined us by radio and television in this session of the 133rd Annual Conference of the Church, convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

We shall now hear from President Henry D. Moyle of the First Presidency of the Church.