

spoke from this pulpit were heard only by those sitting in the audience in the Tabernacle. Today, as announced, millions are listening.

Brother Tuttle of the First Council of Seventy was the latest speaker to this audience. Elder Sterling Sill will now address us.

ELDER STERLING W. SILL

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brothers and sisters, I appreciate very much this privilege of having a part with you in this great general conference of the Church. This is one application of that interesting custom had among us, whereby we set aside special days to think about special things. That is, we set aside the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day. And on that day we let our minds reach up and try to understand the purpose for which that day is set apart. We set apart the third Sunday in June as Father's Day for the same reason.

Days Remembered

And someone has said that the human mind has some of the qualities of the tendrils of a climbing vine. It tends to attach itself and draw itself upward by what it is put in contact with.

Then we have some other wonderful days in which we put our minds in contact with other important ideas. We have Memorial Day, and Easter, and Christmas, and the Fourth of July. We set aside the fourth Thursday in November as Thanksgiving, and on that day we try to build gratitude and appreciation into our lives. And as we recount our blessings, we increase them.

Suppose that at this special time we put our minds in contact with the wonderful days in our lives and single out those with the greatest significance to us personally. You may think that your most important day is the day of your birth. That is the day when an important new life came into being. Or it may be the day of your baptism. That was the day when you repented of your sins and made a covenant with God that you would live your life at its best. You may think that your most important day is the day of your marriage. That is when a new family was born. Certainly the day of your death will be a very interesting day.

Someone has said that the most important event in life is death. Death is the gateway to immortality. We live to die, and then we die to live. Ordinarily we don't like to think about death because it is associated with unpleasantness.

But death does not cease to exist merely because it is ignored. The ancient Egyptians had a much more logical procedure for handling this situation. On their important festive occasions they kept constantly on display before the revelers a great image of death. They wanted to remind themselves that someday they would die. Now I don't want to frighten anyone unduly here today, but I would just like to point out in passing that someday each one of us is going to die. Someone has said that judging from the past there will be very few of us get out of this world alive, and certainly one of the wisest ways to spend life is in an effective preparation for death.

Greatest Day

Branch Rickey, the famous baseball manager, was once asked to name his greatest day in baseball. He replied, "I haven't had it yet." And I would like to invite you to consider this important question. How could you employ your life more constructively than in getting ready for those exciting experiences that you haven't yet had?

H. G. Wells gave us some stimulating self-improvement help, when many years ago he wrote an interesting fantasy entitled *The Time Machine*. Out of his imagination he invented a machine that could carry people through time much as an airplane carries us through space. In his time machine Mr. Wells could go thousands of years back into the past in just a few minutes. Being a historian he took great delight in witnessing the im-

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First Day

portant events of history while they were actually taking place.

He made a trip back to the year 1066 to verify personally some of the details of the Battle of Hastings. Then he went still farther back for a visit in the Golden Age of Greece, and he personally discussed philosophy with Socrates 400 years BC. With his mission completed, his time machine would bring him back into the present. Then by pushing the lever in the other direction, this time scientist could with equal speed go up into the future to study civilizations and institutions as they would someday actually be. And his speedometer always indicated which year of time he was in.

Time in Mind

While this story is only a fantasy, it contains the germ of a great possibility. Actually our minds have been equipped with some significant time-traveling abilities. In thought, we can go backward or forward across time faster than any missile can travel through space. In President McKay's great book, *Gospel Ideals*, he has one paragraph in which he says, "Last night I dreamed about my mother." And then he said, "I would like to dream about my mother more often." In his dream he went back into his own past and relived those important days at his mother's knee, when he learned the lessons of life that brought him to the presidency of the Church. Upon awaking he found that his ideals had been renewed and his ambitions greatly strengthened. He had revitalized his life by reabsorbing the original good from the greatest experiences of his own past.

Past and Future

Whether we refer to this process as reflection, meditation, or assimilation, a great source of strength may be had from reliving the past. An even greater source of strength can come from pre-living the important events of our own futures. This ability to look ahead might be called vision or foresight or the utilization of that wonderful power of imagination, which is like a giant radar beam searching the skies of future

years. Someone has said that one of the greatest gifts that God has ever given to man is an imagination.

When in our minds we pre-live our marriage, we help to determine the kind of person that we would like to be when that event arrives. As we pre-live our success, we develop the abilities necessary to bring it about. And with the information and direction given us in the Holy Scriptures we can even pre-live that important period that lies beyond the boundaries of this life.

"Time Travelling" by Prophets

In a very literal way, God has given important time-traveling abilities to the prophets; for example, Abraham was permitted to go back thousands of years into the past to review his own premortal existence and learn something about the purposes of God, even before this earth had been created. In telling of this experience Abraham said, "Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;

"And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he . . . said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

"And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever." (Abraham 3:22-26.)

Then when Abraham came back into his own present, he was more thor-

oughly fortified for his future adventure in life. On the other hand, Moses was permitted to preview the entire history of the earth from the beginning to the end thereof. On that memorable occasion when Moses met God face to face on the mount, he was given a great vision, in which he beheld all of the earth. The record says there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the Spirit of God:

"And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; . . ." (Moses 1:28.)

In large part the Holy Scriptures are made up of great revelations which God has caused to be written down for our use in preparation for those great days which we haven't yet had. For what advantage it may give us, just suppose that we practise pre-living our own resurrection. A recent newspaper article told of some Russian prisoners of war returning to their families after a twenty-year absence. We can imagine the pleasure of being reunited with loved ones after a long separation, but what a thrilling experience it will be to be reunited with ourselves.

We do not like to think about our spirits and bodies being even temporarily separated at death. But in the resurrection what will be the joy of the faithful when the spirit and the body will be inseparably joined together in celestial glory. Next to the human spirit, the human body is the greatest of all God's creations, without which we could never have a fulness of joy. Our spirits were begotten of God in heaven, and one of the most important purposes of our mortal lives is to be "added upon" with a body of flesh and bones.

This was also one of the important purposes of the earth life of Jesus. It has always been something of a mystery to me why some people are so insistent in depriving God, the greatest of all, of his body. This is especially hard to understand when we know that it was a part of the punishment for Lucifer's sin that he could never progress beyond the status of a spirit. If a body of flesh and bones were not necessary, it never would have been created in the first place. If it were

not necessary for eternity, the resurrection never would have been instituted. If a body were not necessary for God the Father, then there would have been no point in God the Son being resurrected. Certainly a glorious resurrection day will be one of our most thrilling days.

Day of Judgment

One of the most important days of World War II was D Day. D Day was a term used to indicate an unspecified day on which some crucial military operation was to take place. D Day in World War II was on June 6, 1944. That was the day on which the Allied Invasion Forces swarmed onto the beaches of Normandy to reestablish their foothold in western Europe. D Day was the beginning of the end of the World War II. August 15, 1945 was called "VJ Day" or Victory in Japan Day. But the day that will probably be the most exciting of all of our days will also be a "J Day" or Judgment Day.

This is a term frequently used in the scripture to indicate another unspecified day on which the most crucial operation of our existence will take place. This is the world's "settling-up day." It is the day when the books are going to be balanced. This is the day that the prophets have looked forward to and talked about since the world began. In the scripture this day has been called by various names including "The Day of Reckoning," "The Day of the Lord," "The Great and Terrible Day." For some it will be doomsday, but many scriptural passages mention this day as though it needed no qualifying phrase. They merely call it "The Great Day." It is very interesting that at any important race the spectators usually congregate at the finish line. And what could be more exciting than to be at the finish line in the race of life. This is another interesting reason why we should be ready for "J Day." In our own time the Lord has said, "Therefore . . . labor diligently . . . to bind up the law and seal up the testimony, and to prepare the saints for the hour of judgment which is to come"; (D&C 88:84.)

We know quite a lot about "J Day," and apparently it is going to be quite a day. We know the purpose of Judgment Day. We know what action is contemplated. We know who will be in court. We know that God will be there. We know that all of us will be there. We know that all of the members of the Church will be there, and that all of the nonmembers of the Church will be there. Even Satan, and all of his angels will be there. The Prophet Jude said, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." (Jude 1:6.)

Revelation of John

In an interesting "time-machine experience," John the Apostle was permitted actually to preview the judgment. This revelation was of such great consequence that thereafter he has been called John the Revelator. However, this revelation was not given for John's benefit alone. The Lord specifically instructed him to write down what he saw so that we might see it also. John says that while he was in the spirit on the Lord's day, he heard a voice behind him. It was a great voice as of a trumpet "Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, . . ." (Rev. 1:11.)

John says that he turned to see who spoke to him and he saw ". . . one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about . . . with a golden girdle.

"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

"And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sounds of many waters." (Ibid., 1:13-15.)

The Redeemer Lives

This was such a glorious personage that John said, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

"I am he that liveth, and was dead;

and behold, I am alive forevermore . . . and have the keys of hell and of death." (Ibid., 1:17-18.)

What a tremendous point to have clearly in mind, that the Redeemer is alive. And that he is alive forevermore. During the last few hundred years, the world has been flooded with the crucifix. It pictures a dead Christ upon a cross of pain. But Christ did not remain upon the cross. Neither is the tomb his dwelling place. He is alive, and he has the keys of death and hell. He also has the keys of eternal life and celestial glory. To make sure that we should understand, this glorious being said to John, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter"; (Ibid., 1:19.)

Pictures Communicate

Anciently men communicated with each other by means of pictures. Now we usually use words to express thought, but we still think in pictures. If someone tells us his experience, we can understand it best when in our mind's eye we can actually see him doing it. The movie film and television have become popular because pictures are one of the best ways to get ideas into our minds. John didn't just get the facts about the judgment, he actually saw it as it will someday take place. Then he transmitted these ideas to us in words, so that we could reconstruct the picture in our own minds. How well we develop this mental picturing power will largely determine our future.

Former Prime Minister Disraeli once said, "Genius is the power to visualize the objective." This is especially true of eternal objectives. If we lack this ability, we will certainly have trouble. Recently a friend said to me, "I just can't see myself being active in the Church." Neither can he see himself getting down on his knees before God. There are some people who can't see the advantages of honesty or morality or complying with the other commandments of God. This is not because they lack eyes. What they lack is the picturing power of a great faith. It will help us to live more effectively if we project John's words upon the screen of our

minds so that we will be able to see the picture of our greatest day as we will someday actually experience it.

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.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." (*Ibid.*, 20:12-13.)

Even hell will be emptied for judgment day. The problem that troubles our civil courts is that those involved cannot frequently agree as to the facts. But probably no one will be disposed to argue on J Day. If God could show Abraham a rerun of his experience before the earth was created and if he could show Moses the entire history of the world before it happened, we can be sure that he can show us every detail of our lives exactly as they took place, with nothing left out.

An ancient American prophet asks this important question. He said, "... can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all of your wickedness, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?" (*Alma* 5:18.)

Imagine Judgment Day

That calls for an important ability, and the best way to avoid possible tragedy is to focus our imagination upon J Day before we actually get there. We can be absolutely certain that we will all want to be a faithful, devoted, hard-working, enthusiastic, full tithing member of God's kingdom when we stand before the judgment bar. But we must get the impulse to faithfulness ahead of time; as someone has said that hell is "truth seen too late."

Concerning those who fail to pass the final test on J Day, John says, "And whosoever was not found written in

the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (*Rev.* 20:15.) What an experience that is going to be!

"New Heaven and New Earth"

Then for the benefit of the faithful, John says, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

"And I John saw the holy city, [the] new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (*Ibid.*, 21:1-7.)

My brothers and sisters, what a lot of thrilling experiences we haven't yet had! May God help us to be prepared for them when they arrive, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

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

The women of the Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "O Lift Thine Eyes to the Mountains." Following their singing there will be a two-minute organ interlude, then we shall hear from Elder Mark E. Petersen, of the Council of the Twelve, and president of the West European Mission, who will be our concluding speaker.

Selection by the women of the Tabernacle Choir, "O Lift Thine Eyes To The Mountains."