

Tuesday, April 5, 1965

Third Day

I urge all members of the Church to follow the counsel of this prophet, and to you who are not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but desire peace and relief from inner tensions, investigate the message that God has again spoken to men through a prophet. The Lord has restored the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness and reestablished his Church with the power to act in the name of God.

I bear witness that these things are true; you, too, may know that they are true by earnestly studying, praying, and attending the church services. We invite you to do so.

I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Franklin D. Richards, Assistant to the Twelve. The congregation and chorus will now join in singing, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

The Chorus and the congregation sang the hymn, "We Thank Thee, O God, For a Prophet."

### President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, will now speak to us, and he will be followed by Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church.

## ELDER THEODORE M. BURTON

### *Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

#### The Coming of Elijah

A prophecy given in Malachi, chapter 4, verses 5 and 6, has long bothered Bible students. Since the Old Testament closes with these words, it would be well to understand what they mean. I quote:

"Behold, 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 the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Because of a misunderstanding of Luke 1:17, which states that the child later to be named John the Baptist would come in the spirit and power of Elias to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, many persons have thought that John the Baptist who held the office of an Elias, or messenger, was the Elijah who was to return. This verse explains that John's work was a preparatory work to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" and not the work of sealing or completion, which keys Elijah held. When John was bluntly asked the question, he said:

". . . I am not the Christ.

"And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias [Elijah]? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No." (John 1:20-21.)

This, of course, had to be true, for the prophecy stated that Elijah the Prophet should return before the second coming of the Lord, when Jesus was to come in great power, majesty, and glory as judge of all the earth. The mission of Elias held by John the Baptist comes first, and so just as John came before Elijah in the days of Jesus Christ, so John came before Elijah in these latter days to restore the preparatory Aaronic Priesthood before the greater power in the priesthood was given.

#### Elijah Expected

Among Jewish people Elijah is still the expected guest at every passover, for whom a vacant seat is reserved at the table. Thus the tradition of Elijah's return before the coming of the Redeemer in power and glory has been kept alive in the land. There must, therefore, be some important work that this great prophet had to perform, some power that he possessed

which had to be restored again to the children of men so that they might be gathered as the "children of God." At the close of his ministry we read that as Elijah talked to his successor Elisha:

"... behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." (2 Kings 2:11.)

Thus Elijah enjoyed the same glorious privilege that Enoch had of not tasting death but of being translated. According to prophecy both prophets had a special work to do which required this change in their mortal bodies.

#### Restoration Before the Coming of the Dreadful Day

It stretches credulity beyond the breaking point to assume that Joseph Smith the Prophet could have kept all these details in mind when the fulness of the gospel was restored. There is only one explanation which can fill all the requirements of the scripture, and this is that the events transpired just as he claimed they did. Following his great vision of the Father and the Son, an angel came to administer to Joseph and teach him what had to be done to restore the gospel again to the earth before the coming of the great and dreadful day for the wicked, but for the righteous, the glorious day of the Lord.

In the second great vision which Joseph Smith received, the Angel Moroni quoted the words of Malachi as they were originally written and should have been translated:

"Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

"And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers.

"If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming." (D&C 2:1-3.)

After Joseph Smith received the priesthood and the power thereof, it was explained to him that the word

"turn" could be better understood if the word "seal" were used. Thus the full meaning of the work of the priesthood becomes clear, that after Elijah shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, the children should be sealed to the fathers, otherwise the meaning of life would be misunderstood and the whole purpose of life on this earth would be utterly wasted when Christ should return again to claim his children.

#### Commandment to Teach the Gospel

First of all, then, we may ask a question. What were the promises made to the fathers which are so important to our understanding? The first father was Adam, and the Lord gave him a commandment to teach this promise freely unto his children, saying:

"That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born *again* into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, *and eternal life in the world to come*, even immortal glory;

"For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified;

"Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.

"And now, behold I say unto you: This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time." (Moses 6:59-62. Italics added.)

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### Covenant of Adam

When Adam, hearing and understanding these words, made this covenant and was sealed accordingly to become alive both spiritually and physically, God said to him:

“... Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever;

“And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity.

“Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons. Amen.” (*Ibid.*, 6:66-68.)

### Sealed by the Priesthood

Thus Adam was sealed a son of God by the priesthood, and this promise was taught among the fathers from that time forth as a glorious hope to men and women on the earth if they would listen and give heed to these promises.

It was this power of sealing which was given as a key to Elijah by which he could seal the heavens that it did not rain on the wicked King Ahab and his unrighteous wife Jezebel nor on his whole kingdom for the space of three years and six months (Luke 4:25; James 5:1) until the power of God was felt in the land. Later through the use of this priesthood, Elijah loosed the rains, which came again to restore life to the parched land. It was this same sealing power which Jesus Christ promised Peter as he said:

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matt. 16:19.)

### Power to Seal

This sealing power of the priesthood he later gave to the Twelve Apostles as he said to them:

“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (*Ibid.*, 18:18.)

Thus, when, according to prophecy the Lord restored the sealing power of the priesthood to earth again, he informed Joseph that he would send:

“... Elijah, unto whom I have committed the keys of the power of turning [sealing] the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, that the whole earth may not be smitten with a curse;” (D&C 27:9.)

Joseph Smith recorded how this came to pass on April 3, 1836, in the temple at Kirtland, Ohio, as he wrote:

“After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

“Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

“To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

“Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.” (*Ibid.*, 110:13-16.)

The question is sometimes asked why the Prophet Joseph Smith forgot to include a baptismal font in the Kirtland Temple so that the work of salvation for the dead could be done. He did not forget or overlook this matter. The doctrine had not yet been fully revealed, and there was as yet no sealing power given. It is true that the Melchizedek Priesthood had been restored by Peter, James, and John and the gospel ordinances had been revealed, but there was as yet no sealing power given. This came with Elijah's visit as he restored the sealing power of the priesthood to the earth.

### Authority to Seal

I want to impress upon the members of the Church of Jesus Christ that the great key of the priesthood which

was given by Elijah to Joseph was the authority to seal on earth and have that sealing become effective in the heavens. It was not the work for the dead which he restored, but the power to seal the living which made work for the dead possible. It must be understood that the power of Elijah is given to the living, not to the dead. It is the living which are to be sealed to one another according to family lines, father to mother and parents to children and children to parents. Only through the exercise of this great sealing power of the priesthood for the living do baptism for the dead and salvation for the dead become meaningful and possible.

### Ordinances for the Dead

When the living are sealed, they may act as proxies for those who are dead, for as Peter taught:

"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.)

It was for this purpose that Jesus Christ preached to the spirits in prison, that they might be converted and be willing to accept the sealings performed in their behalf by their living descendants. Unless the family of the righteous are thus sealed together from father to son and from mother to daughter back to Adam and from Adam to Christ and from Jesus Christ to God the Eternal Father, the purpose of earth life has been missed, and life itself has been a waste.

By the power of this priesthood restored by the Prophet Elijah, it is now possible for a man to prove his love for his wife and family by living righteously enough to be worthy to take them with him into a temple of the Lord and have them sealed to him, not for this life alone, but by this great sealing power to have that union sealed in the heavens for all eternity. When the poet sang of a love which would last until the "stars grow old and the sun grows cold," he was not singing of a love that was only to last "until death do you part," but of a marriage

that would last throughout the eternity of time, never withering, never dying, never growing old or commonplace.

By the same token, then, our hearts being turned to the promises made to the fathers, we are also turned to the fathers themselves. Should they languish in a spirit prison or be held back from spiritual growth because they were born at a time when this sealing power was not on the earth? As God is a just God and one who loves his children, a way has been prepared whereby those who are dead may be identified and then sealed together in a family relationship in the temples of the Lord by their descendants who love them enough to do this work for them.

We have assumed that this work was to be done merely as a gesture of grace on the part of the living for those of our ancestors who are dead. This is a misconception which comes from not understanding the full meaning of the gospel. The plan of salvation is the plan of saving the children of God in a family relationship. Indeed, we may call this a universal salvation because it applies to all men and women who will qualify themselves through repentance and desire to become the children of God. We cannot be saved without our progenitors. In spite of the faith of all the prophets as cited by Paul in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, he concludes by saying:

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

"God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11:39-40.)

We must be linked to them, and they to their fathers and mothers back to Father Adam and Mother Eve, and they to Jesus Christ, and he to God as his Only Begotten Son in the flesh. Thus to save our own selves and to complete our own salvation, we must have our hearts turned to our fathers, seek out their identities, and perform the work of salvation for them. We will be held accountable for their blood unless we do so.

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### Work of Elijah for the Living and the Dead

So the work of Elijah was not confined to the living or to the dead. It was a universal mission both for the living *and* the dead whereby the way was opened for all who will to hearken and obey and so receive the glory reserved for those who love the Lord. As Jesus told John the Beloved:

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20.)

So the knock is at the door. Any man who *really* loves his wife and his family will not rest until he can qualify himself by acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ and by righteous living to take his wife and family with him into the temple of the Lord and

there have them sealed to him forever under the sealing power of the priesthood, which was brought again to earth by the hand of the Prophet Elijah that our hearts may be filled with these great promises made to the fathers and that we may be sealed into the family of Jesus Christ and through him to be brought into the presence of God the Eternal Father.

I testify of the truth of these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve, has just addressed us. Elder Eldred G. Smith, patriarch to the Church, will be our next speaker, and he will be followed by Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve.

## ELDER ELDRED G. SMITH

### *Patriarch to the Church*

We have heard much concerning family unity in the home during this conference. Truly this is a family church.

### Evidences of Disintegration

I, too, am concerned at the far too many divorces and temple cancellations and signs of disunity among members of the Church. The gospel should be the greatest means of uniting the family.

I can't understand how anyone who has been married in the temple and understands the meaning of celestial marriage, which is for time and all eternity, can get himself in such a condition as even to consider divorce.

### Evidences of Salvation and Survival

I am pleased with the increasing reports of success in missionary work as a result of teaching families. The fundamental purpose for which this earth was created was to establish individual families forever. The family is the only organization which is eternal.

In the beginning God said, "It is not

good for man to be alone." (See Gen. 2:18.)

### Learning To Be Perfect

One of the fundamental purposes of this life is to have experiences whereby we may learn to be perfect. Man is not perfect without the woman, nor is the woman perfect without the man.

The Lord said unto Adam and Eve, as he drove them from the Garden of Eden, that they might learn obedience by their own experience.

He said "they," not the singular pronoun but the plural. We are given many varied experiences in this life to prepare us to live together forever. These experiences should bring an ever increasing love for each other. This includes learning to be patient with each other, to develop increasing tolerance, consideration, and kindness. Love is eternal and knows no bounds and has no measurable limits.

Priesthood and motherhood go hand in hand. Neither is complete without the other. Both are eternal. A perfect family requires the proper fulfillment