

Wednesday, April 6

First Day

It requires a new view of Christianity on the part of all, and a greater willingness to accept it and to live it.

When we see the present widespread disregard of the basic teachings of the Master, we begin to wonder just how many Christians there really are in the world.

Are we Christian if we are unfair to our neighbors? Are we Christian if we are dishonest, or if we resort to scheming, deceit, and duplicity? Are we really Christian if we find no place in our lives for the Golden Rule?

We "Christians" need to take a new look at true Christianity and ask ourselves if we are willing to become genuine disciples of the Savior. True disciples will follow him and will do his will. Hereby may we know that we love him—if we keep his commandments.

Jesus is the Christ. He is the Son of God. He is the Savior of the world, but he will not save us if we do not live the Golden Rule. He will not save

us if we do not understand and live the law of charity. He will not save us if we reject the second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:39.)

It is my earnest hope and prayer that we as Latter-day Saints, that we as Christians throughout the world, may really learn to know the Christ and know that the weightier matters of the law are the matters that will really save us, and for this I earnestly pray in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Joseph Fielding Smith:

We have just listened to Elder Mark E. Petersen of the Council of the Twelve.

We shall hear now from Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder ElRay L. Christiansen, an Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder Burton

ELDER THEODORE M. BURTON

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Following the resurrection of Jesus, two followers of Jesus traveled along the road to Emmaus discussing his crucifixion. The resurrected Lord drew near and joined them, but since their spiritual eyes were closed, they did not recognize him. He walked along the way with them, listening to what they said, then asked them to explain what they were talking about. One of them named Cleopas answered him, telling him how Jesus of Nazareth had been taken by the chief priests and rulers and slain before their eyes. Cleopas said they had hoped that this great prophet might be the one to redeem Israel. However, he had died three days ago, though certain women had reported they had seen an angel who told them that Jesus was alive. This they could not understand, and they were sad and discouraged at what had happened. Then Jesus said to them:

"O fools, and slow of heart to be-

lieve all that the prophets have spoken:

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:25-27.)

He died that we might live

How profitably might we restudy the scriptures to know the full meaning of that sacrifice made by Jesus in redeeming us from death. Jesus died for all men, that all men might be made alive again as taught by Paul:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

"For 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 Cor. 15:20-22.)

He redeemed all men

By his death Jesus redeemed all men, women, and children born upon this earth, that in him they all would be made alive again. Jesus, however, did more than just redeem us from death and the grave. He came into the world not only to redeem mankind from death, but to exalt all men and women who would make a covenant to accept him as their Savior and keep that covenant to the very end of their lives.

This doctrine was to extend world-wide and be valid throughout all time as shown by the charge Jesus gave his ordained ministry:

"Go ye therefore, and teach *all* nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you *always*, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt. 28:19-20. Italics added.)

The promise beyond the grave

This statement stretched the promise even beyond the grave so that the ordinance of baptism and every other earthly ordinance necessary for exaltation could be performed by living persons authorized to do this work vicariously for those that were dead. That this practice was used by the early Christians is made clearly evident when Paul used this ordinance work as an additional evidence of the actuality of the resurrection from the dead, for Paul argued:

"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" (1 Cor. 15:29.)

Well might we ask this same question of every person now living and ask why this early Christian practice was neglected until 130 years ago when the great sealing power of Elijah was again returned to the earth. It was part of early Christian doctrine as taught by Peter, who said that the quickened or resurrected Jesus preached

the gospel of exaltation to the spirits of those who were dead so that they might be judged like the living if they would accept this work done for them by living persons. (1 Pet. 3:18-20; 4:6.)

Peter addressed his letters to those who had covenanted to assist Jesus in the exaltation of mankind, saying to them:

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

"Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (1 Pet. 2:9-10.)

Peter referred to the mercy of Jesus for the individual person. Even a person's personal sins could be forgiven in mercy, if he would fully repent, turn from his sinful ways, and keep the covenant with God to become his child through Jesus Christ.

In his next letter Peter pled with his brethren: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." (2 Pet. 1:10.)

Just before saying this, Peter had taught them the need for faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. The word *charity* is an expression used for love so great that a person is willing to sacrifice a part of his time or worldly possessions for others out of the greatness of his love for them. Mormon defined charity as the pure love of Christ which endureth forever. (Moro. 7:47.)

Assembling Temple Ordinance data

It was with this personal priesthood responsibility in mind that in 1965 a program of compiling data for temple ordinance work for three generations in each individual family was given to the priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This program has been continued into 1966 for those who did not complete this work. By following this program themselves,

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the priesthood can lead the members of the whole Church into a charitable work for themselves, their families and their immediate ancestors. This is no make-work project, but the first step in an organized plan for teaching the priesthood the assignment given them by an angel on September 21, 1823, in these words:

"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.)

This three-generation program is the first practical step in compiling a record that each individual family must present as its sacrifice in the temple, as given in the following words from the scripture:

"Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand; and who can abide the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptation." (D&C 128:24.)

The compilation of an individual family record is a duty of such sacred importance that it cannot be wholly entrusted to others to do for us. We cannot just hope that an aunt or an uncle or a cousin will do this work for the whole family. Relatives and friends can help and assist us. All members of the family should help one another in assembling this information and passing it on to others. The responsibility for compiling a record for our own family, however, rests with each one of

us in our individual families. We each must have a record to show that this holy work has been done as completely as we and our loved ones have power to complete it. As I understand the scripture, this is an individual family responsibility given to the priesthood to administer and to complete.

One of the amazing by-products of this program of listing the record of temple work done for our immediate families is to see how our complacency in the past had resulted in incomplete work for certain members of the family. An aunt, an uncle, or a cousin had been overlooked for one reason or another. Some records were incomplete, for a necessary ordinance here or there had been forgotten. As families worked to fill these gaps, relatives were drawn together as if by magic. Cousins we had not seen for years visited us or called on the telephone. Contacts with loved ones long neglected were awakened again and led to the formation of new family organizations. Family reunions were held that now had purpose and meaning.

Not to be overlooked was the spiritual awakening of some families as sins long overlooked or covered by deception and falsehoods were brought to light and corrected. This repentance would not have occurred without the impetus given through this priesthood program. Thus, the record required of us was made more perfect and our lives in turn made more beautiful as the need for tenderness, forgiveness, and consideration in home and family ties was made evident. No family should hesitate to join in this program of gathering and completing family records to produce a book of remembrance worthy of all acceptation in the temples of God.

The priests of Israel in olden times presented an offering of a male lamb, white and without blemish, as a remembrance of Jesus Christ, who was to come to redeem the world from death and the grave. In an analogous manner our priesthood today with their families are to prepare a book of their dead, perfect, without blemish, containing a record of completed ordi-

nance work done for their dead ancestors. This record containing the completed temple ordinances is a sacrifice of the living for those of their dead loved ones to bind them into the family of Jesus Christ—not only to be redeemed from death, but also, if accepted, exalting them into the very presence of God the Eternal Father.

Assignment to Priesthood and members

This program is the beginning, then, for compiling an individual family record by which members of the priesthood can help make their calling and election sure. As the prophet Joseph Smith declared:

“The greatest responsibility . . . that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, Second Edition, p. 356.)

Why is this so? Because the work of Jesus Christ must be made complete and perfect through the help of those of us who profess to be his servants so that every man and woman who desires to do so may make a personal covenant upon this earth to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord, their Redeemer, and their King.

Of him I testify in the name of the Only Begotten Son, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER ELRAY L. CHRISTENSEN

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I stand before you, my brethren and sisters, in humility and in gratitude for the assurance I have that this is the Church of Jesus Christ, restored in fulfillment of the promises of the Lord made through his prophets and recorded both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament and in other volumes of scripture, and that his prophet-leader in our day is President David O. McKay, who sits with us here today. We are so thankful, President McKay, that you are here.

Christ's earthly reign

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaims without reservation or hesitation the doctrine that Christ will return to the earth to reign in power and great glory. One of our articles of faith states: “We believe that . . . Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.” (Tenth article of faith.)

It will be an actual, literal return of the Lord in person. His coming is assured by Job, who exclaimed: “. . . I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” (Job 19:25.)

From the writings of Moses we learn

concerning the revelation given to Enoch: “And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah.” (Moses 7:60.)

During his ministry upon the earth, Jesus gave his disciples assurance of his coming by 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.)

To those who are not indifferent and who do not close their minds to the truth, the words of Jesus, revealed only a few decades ago, are clear and understandable. To the Prophet Joseph Smith came this promise: “For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, the time is soon at hand that I shall come in a cloud with power and great glory.

“And it shall be a great day at the time of my coming, for all nations shall tremble.” (D&C 34:7-8.)

“. . . be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth.” (D&C 65:5. Italics added.)