

President Joseph Fielding Smith

We thank you good brethren and sisters for this sustaining vote.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve will be our first speaker this afternoon. He will be followed by Elder Alvin R. Dyer.

Elder Spencer W. Kimball

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

President McKay, my brothers and sisters, and friends: I would like to congratulate Brother Dyer, Brother Hanks, Brother Rector, and Brother Dunn on their new appointments, and pray the Lord to bless them in their new responsibilities.

The Pharisees, ever trying to entangle and trick the Savior, again set their traps:

“. . . Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar? . . .

“But Jesus perceived their wickedness, . . .

“. . . Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's.” (Matt. 22:17-18, 21.)

All this is mine

One day, a friend took me to his ranch. He unlocked the door of a large new automobile, slid under the wheel, and said proudly, “How do you like my new car?” We rode in luxurious comfort into the rural areas to a beautiful new landscaped home, and he said with no little pride, “This is my home.”

He drove to a grassy knoll. The sun was retiring behind the distant hills. He surveyed his vast domain. Pointing to the north, he asked, “Do you see that clump of trees yonder?” I could plainly discern them in the fading day.

He pointed to the east. “Do you see the lake shimmering in the sunset?” It too was visible.

“Now, the bluff that's on the south.” We turned about to scan the distance. He identified barns, silos, the ranch house to the west. With a wide sweeping gesture, he boasted, “From the clump of trees, to the lake, to the bluff, and to the ranch buildings and all between—all this is mine. And the

dark specks in the meadow—those cattle also are mine.”

And then I asked from whom he obtained it. The chain of title of his abstract went back to land grants from governments. His attorney had assured him he had an unencumbered title.

“From whom did the government get it?” I asked. “What was paid for it?”

There came into my mind the bold statement of Paul: “For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.” (1 Cor. 10:26.)

And then the psalmist who declared: “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” (Ps. 12:6.)

And then I asked, “Did title come from God, Creator of the earth and the owner thereof? Did he get paid? Was it sold or leased or given to you? If gift, from whom? If sale, with what exchange or currency? If lease, do you make proper accounting?”

And then I asked, “What was the price? With what treasures did you buy this farm?”

“Money!”

“Where did you get the money?”

“My toil, my sweat, my labor, and my strength.”

And then I asked, “Where did you get your strength to toil, your power to labor, your glands to sweat?”

He spoke of food.

“Where did the food originate?”

“From sun and atmosphere and soil and water.”

“And who brought those elements here?”

I quoted the psalmist: “Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.” (Ps. 68:9.)

“If the land is not yours, then what accounting do you make to your

landlord for his bounties? The scripture says: 'Render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's and to God that which is God's.' What percentage of your increase do you pay Cæsar? And what percent to God?

"Do you believe the Bible? Do you accept the command of the Lord through the prophet Malachi? It reads:

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. . . .

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, . . . and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.' (Mal. 3:8, 10.)

"And in the latter days, the Lord said again:

"And if ye seek the riches which it is the will of the Father to give unto you, ye shall be the richest of all people, for ye shall have the riches of eternity; and it must needs be that the riches of the earth are mine to give. . . .' (D&C 38:39.)

"And Moses confirmed to Pharaoh regarding the plagues: '. . . that thou mayest know now that the earth is the Lord's.'" (Exod. 9:29.)

I said again: "I seem to find no place in holy writ where God has said, 'I give you title to this land unconditionally. It is not yours to give, to have, to hold, to sell, despoil, exploit as you see fit.'

"I cannot find such scripture, but I do find this from Psalms: '. . . those that wait upon the Lord, . . . shall inherit the earth.' (Ps. 37:9.)

"And I remember that our Creator covenanted in the council in heaven with us all: '[And] 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.' (Abr. 3:24.)

"It seems more of a lease on which a rental is exacted than of a fee simple title.

"Modern scripture says that if you live the commandments, 'the fulness of

the earth is yours, the beasts of . . . field and the fowls of the air, . . .

"Yea, all things which come of the earth, . . . are made for the benefit and the use of man. . . .' (D&C 59:16, 18.)

"This promise does not seem to convey the earth but only the use and contents which are given to men on condition that they live all of the commandments of God."

But my friend continued to mumble, "Mine—mine," as if to convince himself against the surer knowledge that he was at best a recreant renter.

That was long years ago. I saw him lying in his death among luxurious furnishings in a palatial home. His had been a vast estate. And I folded his arms upon his breast, and drew down the little curtains over his eyes. I spoke at his funeral, and I followed the cortege from the good piece of earth he had claimed to his grave, a tiny, oblong area the length of a tall man, the width of a heavy one.

Yesterday I saw that same estate, yellow in grain, green in lucerne, white in cotton, seemingly unmindful of him who had claimed it. Oh, puny man, see the busy ant moving the sands of the sea.

* * *

Would you rob God?

I stopped on the highway to buy some fruit. The little vending shop was in the edge of the orchard. And I asked the seller, "Are these trees yours?"

He said, "From the highway to the hill—all these are mine, and all the fruit we pick and sell. All this is mine."

And I asked, "Do you have no partner who contributes capital?"

"I earned the funds with which to buy. It is mine."

I said: "You bought the land? You bought the seedlings? But who put chemicals into the soil to make them grow? Who sent the living sap a-climbing all the limbs? Who made them bloom and scent the air with sweet perfume? Did you make rain? Can you command the sun? Do you

put intelligence in trees to produce buds and blossoms, fruit in ripeness, taste and food value? He who made the land, the trees, the elements has land-lien on it all. Have you settled your lease payment?

"I know you pay to Cæsar his full portion, never failing. But do you calculate and pay the part to God?"

"Are these trees yours and yours alone? There is no partner's claim upon the fruit?" He winced.

"Have you integrity? Would you rob God, your partner? Remembering that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof?"

When God had created man and woman he placed them upon the earth to "dress it and to keep it and subdue it." (See Gen. 2:15.) It seems this landlord-tenant relationship is fair—the Lord, the owner, furnishes the land, the air, the water, the sunshine, and all the elements to make it fruitful. The tenant gives his labor.

The Lord promised after the deluge: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. 8:22.)

And the psalmist sang again: "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, . . .

"Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers. . . .

"The pastures are clothed with flocks: . . . they shout for joy, they also sing." (Ps. 65:9-10, 13.)

". . . the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." (Ps. 33:5.)

A month later, a car accident took the life of this horticulturist. He had not paid his keep, nor did he take his orchard with him. Each spring its trees still bloom; each fall the luscious fruit is picked.

* * *

The earth is the Lord's

I saw a lovely house upon a beach. The occupant boastfully pointed to it. "This is my house with its impregnable foundation, its solid walls, its

luxurious appointments, its surpassing view."

One day a warning came. A tidal wave rushed in to shore. All occupants were saved, but as the great sea hurried to its place, only a concrete floor marked the place where his prized possession had stood. The stones were out at sea; the lumber ground to toothpicks, floating in the water. And I remembered again what the psalmist said:

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Ps. 24:1.)

* * *

Do you pay tithes?

Another day I accompanied a friend to his bank. He checked the contents of his safety deposit box, and lifting out a handful of papers, he proudly said to me, "All these are mine. These stocks and bonds are mine." It was evident that his holdings represented wealth. There was possessive pride in his voice.

And I pondered: "How you have prospered! How did you do so well? Where did you get your talents, your abilities? Did you make sight and voice and memory and ability to think?" He hesitated to make answer.

I asked him: "Do you pay tithes? I'm sure you pay your taxes. Do you render unto God that which already was his own? I'm sure that Cæsar never fails to get his portion. What of God? You accepted your earthly opportunities on condition. You rented his land, his equipment, used his elements, you know.

"Does puny man possess, appropriate, bequeath, and give as though he made the earth and heaven? And this without report or settling accounts?"

I met a man upon the campus of a great university, well-trained and brilliant, holding high degrees. We talked of income. Though very large, he felt his all too small to meet his needs. I asked of him: "Do you pay tithes?"

He looked at me with questions in

his eyes. Why should he pay? He earned it—every cent. I told him of the psalmist's theme:

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

And he countered, "I claim no earth—I reside in an apartment. I use no elements—I train the minds of men. I owe no debts to anyone. I earn my income."

And then I asked, "By what great power do you earn?"

"My brains," he said.

And then I asked: "Where did your brains find birth? Did you create them? Build them in a factory, buy them in a store? Did you add element to element, fashioning them so intricately and giving them such power? Where did you get your strength, your vision, power, and health? Where did you get your breath, your continuity? Do you make brains, build bodies, create souls?"

Again, I asked, "Do you pay tithes? You do account to Cæsar. Do you pay the Lord for all his bounteous gifts?"

This man was arrogant and proud. He lived no laws, worshiped no God, was selfish and self-centered. He needed the admonition given the rebellious Israelites:

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God . . . his commandments . . . and his statutes. . . ."

"And when thy herds . . . thy flocks . . . thy silver and thy gold . . . and all . . . thou hast is multiplied;

"Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, . . ."

"Who led thee through . . . drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; . . ."

"And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

"But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth. . . ." (Deut. 8:11, 13-15, 17-18.)

For long years he had been misusing funds—appropriating the tenth which belonged to his Creator. What right had he to use without permission the

Lord's lease funds? and without accounting and without the commensurate worthiness and faithfulness on which his nine-tenths was promised? He had forgotten Malachi's question: "Will a man rob God? . . ." (Mal. 3:8.) He had forgotten the covenant we all had made in the council in heaven, when our Lord proffered:

" . . . We will go down . . . 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." (Abr. 3:24-25.)

"And did you say you made no such rash promise? The answer is: Your very presence on the earth is evidence you accepted this challenge in the preexistent assembly."

I outlived this man too. It was a sad affair when his time came. The strong was weak, the powerful inanimate. His brains still encased in his bone cranium would work no more. He breathed no air, he taught no youth, commanded no more hearers, no more salary, occupied no apartment, but did occupy a little plot of earth on a grassy hillside. But now, I hope he knows: " . . . the earth's the Lord's, and all that therein is. . . ."

He owed not any man. He earned it all, he said.

* * *

Tithing is not for God

I asked another man if he paid tithes. He blushed his answer. "We cannot afford to tithe."

"What? Cannot afford integrity? Cannot afford to return to the Great Provider's program that which was already his?"

He said, "My schooling was expensive. Our little ones have cost us much, and there is still another one to come. The doctor and the hospital will take their toll. Our car was wrecked and cost us that much more. Vacation, illness, living costs go up and leave us none to give the Church!"

"Do you believe in God?"

"Of course," he said.

"You do?" I asked. "Would God

make promises he would not fulfill? You have no confidence in God, else why do you doubt his glorious promises? Your faith is in yourself. God promised he would open heaven's windows and pour you out rich gifts beyond your comprehension, promised on your faithfulness. Do you not need those blessings? For that one tenth, he'll compensate with blessings—little dreamed-of blessings. He said:

“... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1 Cor. 2:9.)

“And again:

“... seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 6:33.)

“You don't believe that God will measure up? No, you do not trust your Lord. You keep all funds you have collected and use them according to your own judgment. You fear he would not make good his promises.

“Your very debts, your many troubles show incompetence to handle your affairs. You've partly failed in your rich stewardship. Can you control your business better than the Lord? Would you do well to use this manager in whom you have no trust? We know he will not fail.”

Tithing is not for God. It is we who clip the coupons and collect the dividends.

* * *

The things that are God's

The salaried man complained: “My neighbor has a farm. His family lives upon it. We buy our living from a store with cash. They kill a beef, a pork, and feed themselves from their deep freeze. Their garden loads the table with vegetables; the field feeds the cows that furnish milk products; their farm grows wheat for the poultry for the table; and the hens furnish meat and eggs. Do you pay tithes on your farm land production?”

The answer is: “Of course, you pay if you are true to your commitments. No honest man would rob his Lord of tithes and offerings.”

We ask again: “Do you feel generous when you pay your tithes? Boastful when the amount is large? Has the child been generous to his parents when he washes the car, makes his bed? Are you liberal when you pay your rent, or pay off notes at banks? You are not generous, liberal, but merely honest when you pay your tithes.”

“I have made the earth, and created man upon it,” says the Lord. “I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.” (Isa. 45:12.)

Perhaps your attitudes are the product of your misconceptions.

Would you steal a dollar from your friend? a tire from your neighbor's car? Would you borrow a widow's insurance money with no intent to pay? Do you rob banks? You are shocked at such suggestions. Then, would you rob your God, your Lord, who has made such generous arrangements with you?

Do you have a right to appropriate the funds of your employer with which to pay your debts, to buy a car, to clothe your family, to feed your children, to build your home?

Would you take from your neighbor's funds to send your children to college, or on a mission? Would you help relatives or friends with funds not your own? Some people get their standards mixed, their ideals out of line. Would you take tithes to pay your building fund, or ward maintenance? Would you supply gifts to the poor with someone else's money? The Lord's money?

The Lord continues to ask: “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me.”

There echo again and again the words of the Master: “Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's.” And he has said, “Today is a day for the tithing of my people.” (See D&C 64:23.)

Does not the law of tithing apply to all the children of men, regardless of church or creed? All who believe the Bible really must believe that this is a law of God.

There echo again and again the words of the Master, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's."

The Lord will bless all those who love and live his laws. This I know, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

We have just listened to Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Council of the Twelve.

Our next speaker will be President Alvin R. Dyer, whom we have just sustained as a counselor in the First Presidency.

President Alvin R. Dyer

Counselor in the First Presidency

I feel standing by my side this day my dear wife. She, with my family, has been a great support to me in every effort to serve the Lord.

The way to eternal life

Many years ago a noted lawyer sought out Jesus of Nazareth to inquire of him the requirements that man must adhere to in seeking for the way to eternal life. The answer which the Lord gave, though simple, was not easily understood by this man schooled in the wisdom of men.

The Lord gave him this answer: that man must be "born again" if he is to enter the kingdom of heaven and dwell eternally in the enlightened presence of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. (See John 3:1-5.)

Being born again is an essential part of conversion to the gospel, as Jesus instructed Nicodemus. Men, in a similar way, perhaps with less portent, have many rebirths in different ways in the course of a mortal lifetime. Usually these are associated with important events or near tragedies. But being born again is part of regeneration in the changing vicissitudes of life.

Experiences bring new birth

I recall now being near unto death upon two occasions, once as a boy of deacon age when I foolishly placed a small-headed hat pin about two and a half inches long into my mouth. I was seated on a couch by the window in our home when a tremendous clap of thunder so startled me that I swallowed the hat pin. When I realized

what I had done, I shook all over with fear. I fell to my knees praying that this accident would not take my life. I promised the Lord then and there as a boy that I would serve him all my days. I believe that in that communication with God, I had a new birth.

Upon another occasion, with my wife and two children, I arrived at the beach in Santa Monica, California, after a hot drive over the desert in a car that was not air-conditioned. We were soon in our bathing suits and found our way to the beach. My wife and the children stopped to play in the sand and enjoy the cool breeze. But this was not enough for me. I plunged into the ocean, swimming out farther than I realized, and when I attempted to swim back, I found myself held by a swirling undertow. I struggled with all my strength but to no avail. Then I realized my plight and that I faced drowning and would never see my loved ones again in this life. In a few seconds reflected events in my life raced through my mind. Again I sought by intense supplication that I be rescued from a condition I had thrust myself into by failing to heed the beach warning of a posted red flag.

I shouted at the top of my voice for help, and in spite of the roar of the surf and foggy atmosphere, my cry for help was heard by a lifeguard, who reached me in a rowboat as my strength was nearly exhausted.

We reached shore, and after expressing my gratitude for the alertness of the guard, I sat down on the sand