

President Dyer

Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve will be our

first speaker this afternoon. He will be followed by Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve.

ELDER HOWARD W. HUNTER

Of the Council of the Twelve

Nearly two thousand years ago, Corinth was one of the most celebrated cities of Greece, founded 1,500 years before the Christian era, supposedly by the grandfather of Ulysses. Because of its strategic position, it commanded the commerce and navigation of the Mediterranean Sea from the Straits of Gibraltar on the west to the great seaport of Alexandria on the east. With the decline of the Greek political power and civilization, the Roman power was expanded over the Mediterranean world by a series of successful wars.

It was in one of these wars, 146 years before Christ, that Corinth was destroyed by the Romans but afterward rebuilt under Julius Caesar as a Roman colony. The city and harbors which it controlled are about 50 miles west of Athens. It was not the philosophical center that Athens was acclaimed to be, but it was the capital of the Roman province and ranked with Ephesus and Antioch as great commercial centers. According to the historical records, it was known as the wealthiest city of Greece.

Splendor of Corinth

It is said that the city of Corinth exceeded all the cities of the world at that time for the splendor and magnificence of its public buildings. The temples, palaces, theaters, and other edifices were ornamented with the columns, capitals, and bases which have become patterns for the Corinthian style of architecture all over the world. The statues of Jupiter, Venus, Neptune, Diana, Apollo, and other Roman gods and goddesses that adorned the city are known today as some of the finest art objects of this period. In the center of the city was the great marketplace surrounding the bronze statue of

Athena and the temple of Apollo, the most prominent ruin from antiquity.

Riches produced luxury, and luxury a total corruption of morals. On the Acrocorinthus rising abruptly above the city was the famous Temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of carnal love, symbolic of the domination of the city by licentious impulses. There were many other temples dedicated to immoral practices, but in this one temple alone there were a thousand virgins engaged as slaves to the goddess in temple prostitution. The inhabitants of the city were as lascivious as they were learned.

Paul's Missionary labors

It was to this city, notorious even in the world of that time for drunkenness and sensuality, that Paul came as a missionary in the spring of the year 50 A.D. He was the first missionary to carry the gospel of Christ to Greece. Some of the regions through which he had passed on the way to Corinth were receptive to his teaching; others were not. In Athens there were a few converts, but there is no record of a branch of the church being established there. The success at Corinth was a contrast. Paul got a strong foothold, and the branch which was established became one of the most important of the early church.

The record tells us that he stayed 18 months in Corinth, longer than in any other city except Ephesus, but we have little information concerning the missionary work of these months. Several epistles were written to the saints in other branches of the church during this stay, and his labors were successful, as demonstrated by the large branch which was established by the many converts.

At the conclusion of his labors, Paul sailed from Corinth, stopping at Ephesus and Caesarea, then traveled to Jerusalem and returned to Antioch. After a rest, he commenced another missionary journey. While again in Ephesus, word came to him from several sources of a crisis developing in the branch of the church in Corinth. One of the fascinating subjects in the life of the apostle is the exchange of communications and news between him and his converts in Corinth. The communications revealed that there were factions forming in the branch with different views regarding moral conduct and doctrine. Some of the converts were assuming a libertine or freethinking attitude with respect to the doctrines which had been taught to them by Paul and the missionaries who worked with him. Some were defending loose sexual standards that were rampant in the notorious city. These problems came into being because of the background of the new converts and the conditions of the time and place in which they were living. They were reactions to the new faith which had been taught to them against the old background which had been part of their former conduct and thinking.

Letter to Corinthians

It was his concern over these disappointing happenings and also the questions that had been asked of him in the communications that caused Paul to write a letter to the saints at Corinth at Easter time, the anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus. The letter was not intended to be an organized doctrinal presentation of faith, but an admonition to the saints and an answer to their questions. It portrays the simple, unphilosophical character of the gospel of the crucified Christ. This letter, which has been preserved as part of scripture, casts light on the many aspects of the writer's thoughts and also the problems which arose in the early branches of the church. In this letter, which we know as First Corinthians, Paul pleads with them to abstain from dissensions, to be of

one mind, and to be unified. He reprimands them for their fornications, immorality, and loose sex mores. The letter admonishes the women not to follow the modernistic tendencies which they were embracing, and it teaches the saints how to properly observe the Lord's Supper.

The last subject of the letter is an extensive discussion of the resurrection. It is not clear whether there was a division of the saints on this subject, whether the question had been asked in the communications, or whether it was the Easter season that caused Paul to dwell so heavily upon the subject of the resurrection. In any event, this letter to the saints gives the earliest and most important witness to the resurrection of the Savior.

Witness of Christ's Resurrection

Paul commences by saying:

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

"And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3-4.)

This statement indicates the source of his knowledge of the resurrection. The story of the crucifixion has been related in scripture from the visible facts of what was seen and what was actually heard during those dark hours, but the account of the resurrection was a proclamation or a declaration of what had happened when the crucified Lord took up his body from the dead and arose from the tomb. Paul indicates in these opening words that his knowledge came to him by revelation from God, not from man. Then he adds:

"And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

"After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

"After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles." (1 Cor. 15:5-7.)

These appearances to other persons, many of whom were then yet living and who had actually seen him, were

cited as additional proof of the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead.

Personal Witness

Paul was saying that he accepted the testimony of those who had seen him, and if there was doubt in the minds of the saints of Corinth, they could verify these facts from living persons. Then follows this significant statement:

"And last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time." (1 Cor. 15:8.)

Thus Paul adds his personal witness, referring to his experience on the way to Damascus when he was suddenly changed from a persecutor to one of the greatest exponents. He refers to himself as "one born out of due time," that is, after the time that Jesus conversed in person with his followers. His dramatic change and conversion is used in his argument as the final point to prove the actual resurrection of Jesus. Paul was anxious that the saints would not only believe, but should never have the least doubt as to this basic fact upon which eternal life hinges. The writer of the letter then asks this question:

A challenging question

"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.)

This is a challenging question. Why are you performing vicarious baptisms for those who are dead if there is no resurrection? History bears out the facts of the practice of baptizing for those who had died without the benefit of this ordinance. It would seem certain, from the question that was asked by Paul, that this vicarious practice was followed in the branch of the church in Corinth. His query is well taken. There would be no sense in such ordinances except there be a resurrection. Nothing matters if there is not a resurrection; everything would end in the darkness of death. Paul then quotes Isaiah: ". . . let us eat, and drink; for to morrow we die." (1 Cor. 15:32.) Only a person of atheistic

beliefs could sink to such depths of irreverence, but the reality of a resurrection gives hope; it is uplifting, a joy to the righteous.

Nature of resurrected body

Paul now turns to an explanation of the nature of the resurrected body: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (1 Cor. 15:35.) After asking that question, he proceeds to explain the change of the body in its resurrected state by using the analogy of the seed that is placed in the ground, giving birth to the new plant. These are his words:

"Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

"And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

"But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." (1 Cor. 15:36-38.)

Paul then explains in his letter the differences existing in various bodies:

"All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory." (1 Cor. 15:39-41.)

Analogy misunderstood

Now follows one of the most misunderstood and controversial statements made by Paul:

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

"It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15:42-44.)

Because Paul distinguishes between a natural body and a spiritual body, and had previously referred to the seed planted in the ground, a false conclusion is reached from the analogy. It is argued that the seed itself is not harvested—it dies in the ground and there comes forth a new plant; therefore, this is so with the body which is buried in the ground—it comes forth a spiritual body, something new and different. This appears to be strengthened by the fact that Paul adds: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. . . ." (1 Cor. 15:50.)

Redemption of the soul

Now let me point up the fallacy of this reasoning by this statement from scripture:

"And the spirit and the body are the soul of man.

"And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul." (D&C 88:15-16.)

There is a separation of the spirit and the body at the time of death. The resurrection will again unite the spirit with the body, and the body becomes a spiritual body, one of flesh and bones but quickened by the spirit instead of blood. Thus, our bodies after the resurrection, quickened by the spirit, shall become immortal and never die. This is the meaning of the statements of Paul that "there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" and "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The natural body is flesh and blood, but quickened by the spirit instead of blood, it can and will enter the kingdom.

First fruits of resurrection

The best example of the validity of this position—and which portrays the truth of the resurrection—is the happening which we commemorate at this Easter season, when Jesus came forth from the tomb, the first fruits of the resurrection. The record tells us he appeared to many and they recognized him, the most specific example occurring that first Easter day when ten of the Twelve were together, and "Jesus himself stood in the midst of them,

and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

"And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

"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.

"And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet." (Luke 24:36-40.)

Not a spirit, but a body reunited with the spirit—a spiritual body as defined by Paul.

Atonement of Christ

"We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel." (Article of Faith 3.)

We also believe in the literal resurrection of the body, reunited with the spirit, becoming the spiritual body or the soul as defined by scripture. If we should eliminate from our religious beliefs the doctrine of the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of mankind, there would be nothing left but a code of ethics. The propositions of ethics may be noble, but they lack those elements of the gospel that lead men to eternal exaltation. Philosophy and theology may be interesting and give us lofty concepts, and we may become inspired by profound thinking, but Christian faith is based upon the simplicity of the gospel, the example, the life, and the teachings of Jesus Christ. This was the witness of Paul to the saints at Corinth, and the message applies to us in this day, living as we do in a world that can be compared in many ways to Corinth of old. In a society of turmoil, immorality, freethinking, and questioning of the reality of God, we reach out for the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ—the gospel which gives to us comfort, hope, a desire for righteousness, and peace in one's heart.

I have a conviction that God lives

and that Jesus is the Christ. As Paul bore testimony to the saints of Corinth by his letter at that Easter season many years ago, I add my witness that we shall rise from mortal death to have life everlasting, because of the atoning sacrifice and resurrection of the Savior. In my mind I picture him with arms outstretched to all who will hear: ". . . I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth

in me shall never die." (John 11:25-26.)

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Alvin R. Dyer

Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us. Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the First Council of Seventy.

ELDER THEODORE M. BURTON

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My brothers and sisters, many people have asked me about the new GIANT system of genealogy announced by the First Presidency in the last general conference. Where did this idea come from, and what is the reason for this change?

The answer is that it developed naturally out of our present system. As problems arose in the system we were using, we began to study them out in our own minds. We consulted earlier revelations and directions from former Church leaders and then prayed earnestly for wisdom and sought counsel to know the mind of the Lord for our day. We met frequently with our present leaders and presented questions directly to the First Presidency for answers.

As we received greater light and knowledge, we had to revise some of our new ideas and concepts until, by listening to the whisperings of the Spirit, a system finally evolved that could be approved for presentation to the people. May I discuss for a few moments in general terms how we obtain knowledge, for an understanding of how this principle applies particularly to the GIANT system.

A complex world

We live in a world so complex and involved that sometimes life becomes a frustrating experience. There are many kinds of voices in the world, and

as Paul explained to the Corinthians: "So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

"Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." (1 Cor. 14:9-11.)

Among the many voices we hear, which voice should we believe? With so many duties and responsibilities, which ones should have priority? With various paths stretching out before us, which path should we follow? With so much work to be done, what work should we do first?

Making decisions

It is evident from this multiplicity of choices that we need to make decisions. But if we make a decision based solely on our limited experience without consulting experts, the likelihood of making a correct choice becomes a matter of pure chance. In order to know what to do, it might be well to reflect on how the Lord prepares us to make decisions.

In the beginning God gave Adam a choice of whether to be obedient and trust in the Lord or to seek knowledge on his own. Adam chose to make his