

## Elder Bruce R. McConkie

*Of the First Council of the Seventy*

## ● Salvation is a family affair.

We are all members of the family of God the Eternal Father. We are his spirit children. We lived with him in the family unit before the foundations of this world were laid.

In one of our great doctrinal hymns we sing:

"In the heavens are parents single?  
No; the thought makes reason stare!  
Truth is reason, truth eternal  
Tells me I've a mother there.

"When I leave this frail existence,  
When I lay this mortal by,  
Father, Mother, may I meet you  
In your royal courts on high?  
Then, at length, when I've completed  
All you sent me forth to do,  
With your mutual approbation  
Let me come and dwell with you."

—*Hymns*, No. 138

**The plan of salvation**

While we yet dwelt in his presence, our exalted and eternal Father ordained the plan of salvation, which would enable us to advance and progress and become like him.

This gospel plan offered to all of God's children the privilege of a mortal probation and the hope of eternal life. We were all promised that through the atonement of Christ we would be raised in immortality, and that if we obeyed the laws and ordinances of the gospel we would have eternal life.

Now eternal life is the name of the kind of life which God our Eternal Father lives. Eternal life is God's life, and God's life is eternal life. Thus, if we gain eternal life it will be because we advance and progress and become like him.

**Hope of eternal life**

President Lorenzo Snow penned these words relative to this glorious hope of gaining eternal life:

"The boy, like to his father grown,  
Has but attained unto his own;  
To grow to sire from state of son,  
Is not 'gainst Nature's course to run.

"A son of God, like God to be,  
Would not be robbing Deity."  
—"Man's Destiny," *Improvement Era*,  
Vol. 22, p. 661.

Manifestly if we are to become like our Eternal Father, we must become immortal as he is immortal; we must gain the character, perfections, and attributes which he possesses; we must attain the power, glory, and dominion which he enjoys; and we must create for ourselves eternal family units patterned after his eternal family.

Now that gospel which he has restored in this dispensation is a gospel of eternal life. It is the same system of salvation possessed by all the prophets and all the saints in all dispensations. It consists of those laws and powers whereby we may become perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect; whereby we can create, perfect, and perpetuate our own eternal family units.

**The great work of God and man**

The great work of God our Father was creation. He brought us into being; we were born as members of his family; and by his power the earth and all things thereon came into existence. And God has done his work perfectly.

The great work of Christ was redemption. Through his atoning sacrifice all men are raised in immortality, while those who believe and obey the whole law of the whole gospel are raised unto eternal life. And Christ has done his work perfectly.

The great work of every man is to believe the gospel, to keep the commandments, and to create and perfect an eternal family unit. And the Latter-day Saints are seeking to do their work as near to perfection as they can.

### Celestial marriage

It follows that everything we have in the Church centers around celestial marriage, and that salvation is a family affair.

From the moment of birth into mortality to the time we are married in the temple, everything we have in the whole gospel system is to prepare and qualify us to enter that holy order of matrimony which makes us husband and wife in this life and in the world to come.

Then from the moment we are sealed together by the power and authority of the holy priesthood—the power to bind on earth and have it sealed eternally in the heavens—from that moment everything connected with revealed religion is designed to help us keep the terms and conditions of our marriage covenant, so that this covenant will have efficacy, virtue, and force in the life to come.

### The family unit

Thus celestial marriage is the crowning ordinance of the gospel, the crowning ordinance of the house of the Lord. Thus the family unit is the most important organization in time or in eternity.

And thus we should have more interest in and concern for our families than for anything else in life.

Every major decision should be made on the basis of the effect it will have on the family unit. Our courtship, schooling, and choice of friends; our employment, hobbies, and place of residence; our social life, the organizations we join, and the service we render mankind; and above all, our obedience or the lack of it to the standards of revealed truth—all these things should be decided on the basis of their effect on the family unit.

### Importance of perfection

There is nothing in this world as important as the creation and perfection of family units of the kind contemplated in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so, when the Lord speaks to husbands, he says: "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt

cleave unto her and none else." (D&C 42:22.)

When his voice is heard by wives, it imposes a similar obligation upon them with reference to their husbands.

To both of them he commands: "Thou shalt not commit adultery or anything like unto it." (See D&C 59:6.)

When he speaks to parents, he directs them to bring up their children in light and in truth, to teach them the gospel, to set them examples of godly conduct.

When he speaks to children, his decrees are: "Obey your parents in the Lord" (Eph. 6:1), and "Honour thy father and thy mother." (Exod. 20:12.)

When he speaks to families his counsel is: "Love, sustain, and support each other;

"Obey the full gospel law; keep the commandments;

"Strive to perfect the lives of each of your members; strengthen the weak; reclaim your straying loved ones, and rejoice in their renewed spiritual strength;

"Seek your kindred who have not yet received the gospel, and invite them to come unto Christ and partake of his goodness; and

"Reach out to your dead kindred in the world of spirits and make the blessings of the gospel available to them through temple ordinances."

### Salvation a family affair

It is written that neither is the man without the woman nor the woman without the man in the Lord. In the perfected church family it might also be said that neither are the parents without the children nor the children without the parents in the Lord's type of family.

The true gospel is family centered. Full salvation consists of the continuation of the family unit in celestial glory. Those for whom the family unit continues have eternal life; those for whom it does not continue do not have eternal life, for heaven itself is but the projection of a Latter-day Saint family into eternity.

That power by which salvation comes is so great that it can make of earth a heaven, and of man, a god.

Saturday, April 4

First Day

The noblest concept that can enter the heart of man is the concept that the family unit continues in eternity, and that salvation is a family affair.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

### President Joseph Fielding Smith

The congregation and chorus will stand and sing "O Ye Mountains

High," after which Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve, will be our speaker.

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The congregation sang the hymn, "O Ye Mountains High."

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## Elder Sterling W. Sill

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

● In Charles Dickens' great book *The Tale of Two Cities*, he talks about the French revolutionary period of 200 years ago, almost as though he were describing our own day. In establishing the setting for his story, he said:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way. . . ."

#### A world of contrasts

In our world of contrasts, the hazards frequently become greater as the benefits are increased, and it seems that difficulty is one of the prices that we pay for our blessings. The 12 months lying immediately before us will probably be the greatest period that our world has ever seen. In this coming year more babies will be born than in any other comparable period. More new inventions will be made than ever before. We will learn more new things and have greater material comforts. In the next 12 months more people will go to college, and more people will join the Church of Christ than in any other year. On the other hand, there will probably be more people die than ever before. We may have more

troubles, commit more crimes, use more dope, drink more liquor, indulge in more sins, foster more soul-destroying violence, and send a greater number of ourselves to hell, than ever before.

#### Dispensation of fulness of times

The apostle Paul spotlighted the greatness of our day when he referred to it as the dispensation of the fulness of times, when God would gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are upon the earth. (See Eph. 1:10.) The ancient prophets eagerly looked forward to our time, and many of them almost lived in our day. They knew about our great knowledge explosion and the unheard-of miracles, wonders, and wealth that it would produce. Jesus himself looked beyond the black night of the dark ages, caused by the apostasy from God in the meridian of time, and he saw our day, when the gospel would be restored in a fullness never before known in the world. And as one of the signs preceding his own glorious second coming to the earth, he said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. 24:14.)

#### Preparation for millennium

Our generation is living on the approaches of the final cleansing that will prepare the earth for its great