

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER CHAS. W. PENROSE,

In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City,
Sunday Afternoon, May
1st, 1881.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

WE have met this afternoon, my brethren and sisters and friends, to worship God the Eternal Father in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, I trust under the influence of His Holy Spirit, and I pray that that Spirit may rest upon this entire congregation and that I may be enlightened by its influence so as to be able to say something this afternoon which will edify and instruct the congregation. Having been called upon to speak to you I hope I shall have your attention and the benefit of your faith and your prayers so that such subjects may be presented to my mind as will be profitable for us to ponder upon on this occasion.

We are partaking of the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the world. We do this in remembrance of Him, in remembrance of the atonement which He wrought for us and for all mankind who will listen to His voice and obey His commandments, and also to direct our thoughts to another great event in connection with the history of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which is yet to take place. We take this sacrament this afternoon not only in remembrance of the past but to direct our minds to the future. We partake of it to witness that we believe in the atonement wrought out by the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Calvary, and also that we expect his reappearance on the earth. We expect that He will come again, not the next time as the babe of Bethlehem, not the next time to be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but as the Lord of life and glory, as the King of Israel to sit upon the throne of his father David, to rule from the rivers to the ends of the earth; not to be brought unto the subjection of men, but to have all things made subject to Him; not to bear His cross upon the side of Calvary, but to come as a monarch, as a ruler of men, as the rightful Lord and King of this earth upon which we live. In partaking of these emblems this afternoon, then, our minds are carried back to the past, and carried forward to the future, and when we hold a piece of bread, blessed by the servants of God, in our hands, we take it in token and witness to God that we believe in Him of whom this piece of bread is a representative. This bread is to us a representation of the body of Christ broken for us. When we drink of the cup we do so in remembrance of His blood and as a witness to God and to each other that we believe in Jesus Christ. Not only that, but we also bear testimony before the heavens and one another that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and remember Him and keep the commandments which he has given unto us. So that in our public assemblies on Sunday afternoon—or the sabbath day if you please to call it so—we come together to renew our covenants, to make manifest before God and one another our feelings and desires in relation to these matters, to witness to the heavens and the earth that we are called to be saints, that we have come out of the world, that we have separated ourselves from that which is evil, and dedicated and consecrated ourselves to the service of God, to carry out His purposes on the earth, to be guided by His Spirit, to be prompted by the same motives that actuated our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he was a man among men, to renew our covenants before God that we will serve Him in all things, and that we will prefer the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, that we will prefer the Kingdom of God as He has set it up on the earth in the latter days above all other things; that we will place in our estimation first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness with the hope and belief that if we do this all other things shall be added unto us as we need them.

This, then, is a solemn occasion and although we have the privilege of meeting as we do this afternoon every Lord's Day, yet it is none the less sacred and should be none the less solemn to us, and we should endeavor on this occasion to call

in our scattered thoughts, to refrain from thinking upon the things of this world, our cares, our business, the affairs that belong outside of the Tabernacle, and concentrate our thoughts and our feelings and our desires towards God and the things of God, so that His Spirit may brood over us, and that we may be refreshed thereby; that we may be spiritually nourished and fed; that when we leave our meeting place we may go away strengthened and prepared to battle with the ills of life and with the evils of this world. I sometimes think that if we were deprived for a little season of the privilege of meeting together and partaking of these sacred emblems we would attach more importance to our meetings and to the ordinances of the Lord's House. If we were deprived of the privilege of listening to the voice of the servants of God instructing us in our duties for a time, perhaps we would value their teachings more than we do. The absence of the music this afternoon from our large organ put me in mind of this. I am sorry we cannot have music from the organ to-day. I like to hear the tones that come from that fine instrument, an organ built by the handiwork of the people of God, of this community, when played upon by a good musician. Perhaps if we are deprived of the use of that organ for a little while we will value it the more after the repairs are completed. So it is with our public gatherings; so it is with the various means of grace that are so abundantly bestowed upon us as the children of God. God has been very merciful to us in affording us so many privileges of instruction. All the time there is a voice saying, 'this is the way, walk ye in it.' There is no need for any man or any woman among the latter-day Saints to go astray for the lack of instruction. We have our public meetings in our settlements on the Sabbath day, where the people come together to worship the Father in the name of the Son, where they can receive the outpourings of the Spirit in a collective capacity, as a congregation. We have our Sunday Schools to which we can send our little children that they may be taught in the way of life, and in the paths of holiness and virtue before the Lord. We have our Ward Meetings on Sunday evenings, where we can meet together in a ward capacity, and bear our testimony to the truth, or receive instructions from our Bishops and from the missionaries who may visit us from time to time. And during the week we have many opportunities of assembling together to hear the word of life, to talk to one another of the things of God and be instructed in our various duties, both temporal and spiritual. Then we have the great privilege given us of God, that all the time we may draw near unto the throne of grace and receive for ourselves, individually as well as collectively, the power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten us in regard to the purposes of God, to strengthen us against sin, to enable us to cultivate the good that is in us and grow up unto Him who is our living head in all things, even the Lord Jesus.

This is the greatest boon that could be conferred upon mortals while dwelling in the flesh, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the spirit of truth, which reveals unto men the things of the Father and of the Son, which is a spiritual light to the inward being, which is the same to the spiritual nature of man as the light that streams from the sun is to the physical nature of man. As we are able to see the various physical objects of creation by the light of the sun, or as we call it, natural light, so by the aid of this spiritual light we can discern the things of God, and they can be made just as plain to our spiritual eyesight by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the things of the earth are made plain to our natural eyes by the power of the natural light that comes from the sun, or any artificial means which we may use or discover. The light which comes from God to enlighten the mind of man, to some degree is universally diffused like the light of the glorious sun. It is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. There is no person born into this world who breathes the breath of life but who at the same time receives a portion of this divine spirit, this divine illumination. This blessing is not confined to people who are called "Christian," it is not confined to any particular branch of the human family. All people who live and move and have a being on the face of the earth are enlightened measurably, by this Spirit of truth

which comes from God. It is the light and the life of the world at the same time. Just as we read in the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. Speaking in regard to Jesus, who is there called the word, we read: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God; and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." * * * "That was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." This is that spirit of intelligence spoken of in the Book of Job. We read there that "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." If we have any understanding at all, any intelligence at all, any natural intelligence born with us into the world, it is the gift of God. He that created the heavens and the earth, the seas and the fountains of water; He that made the sun and his light thereof—He lighteth every man that cometh into the world. This is the same spirit which is called the Comforter, although it does not operate in the same degree as that spirit which is called the gift of the Holy Ghost, which we read about in the New Testament, in the promises of Jesus Christ to his disciples and to those who would keep his commandments; but all people born into the world receive a portion of divine light, and if they would grow up under the influence of that light and be actuated and guided by its whisperings all through their earthly career, it would lead them gradually up to the fountain of light, to the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; it would lead gradually to God, so that they could commune with God while they remain in the flesh; they would grow up nearer and nearer to Him, for they would choose the good and refuse the evil; they would take unto their nature that which would lead them towards God, and they would repel from them that which would lead downward, they would discern the straight and narrow path that leadeth unto life, and they would avoid the broad road which leadeth unto destruction, in which so many of the human family have walked from the beginning. It is because the people that dwell on the earth do not listen to the "still small voice" of that natural light which is born with them into the world that they do not receive the things of God. It is because they love that which savors of darkness and of evil that they do not comprehend the things of God as they are in Him, and that they are shut out from that communion which all people might have if they would walk in the right way.

We are placed here in a world of opposites. Just as it was symbolized in the Garden of Eden with regard to the tree of life and the tree of death, or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So it is here. All through the ages that are past, God has placed before His children good on the one hand and evil on the other, and it is the privilege of all men to choose the good or the evil, which they please. Their agency is free. God will force no man to heaven; he will allow no man to be forced to hell. We are placed here where there is a mixture of good and evil, of light and darkness, of truth and error, of sorrow and joy, of bitter and sweet, of life and death; life spiritual and death spiritual, and also life and death natural. Why are we placed here in a world of death, in a world of opposites? That we may be tested; that we may be tried, and that we may manifest to God and angels and the heavenly hosts, and to one another what we are fit for in the world to which we are hastening. We are all hastening to another sphere, and we shall all be judged for the deeds we have done while we have dwelt in this sphere. All will be judged according to their acts and opportunities, according to the light that they have received or the light that they might have received if it had pleased them to open their eyes to it, and everyone in the due time of the Lord will be placed where he or she is fit to be. We will find our own level. Just as water finds its natural level. The time will come when every spirit will find its own level. We will all gravitate some day into the place where we belong, and that place will be determined by our condition, according to the opportunities we have had, and according to the manner he have availed ourselves of them, either in

cultivating the good and rejecting the evil, or in rejecting the good and cultivating the evil. We are all responsible individuals. Every person who arrives at the years of accountability becomes a responsible being. He is responsible to the Being who created him, to God who is the Father of his spiritual nature; for although we are all living under various circumstances here upon the earth, although mankind is made up of different races, yet, so far as our spiritual nature, the real individual, is concerned, we are the sons and daughters of God, who is the Father of the spirits of all men, and He that hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation," has sent us His sons and daughters to dwell upon the earth in earthly bodies, some of us in one part of the world and some in another, but we are all the children of one Father, and therefore we are all brethren and sisters. And the time will come when our Father, who has sent us here for an experience, for a schooling, for an education, that we might understand the things that pertain to this lower sphere and grapple with evil and overcome it, will judge as with a righteous judgment, and we will all go to the place which we have fitted ourselves for by our earthly acts.

Now, the Lord, in the beginning of our temporal existence on the earth, placed within us this spirit of life and light, and if we would be actuated by that spirit and walk in the path that leads to the Father's presence, we would get so near to Him that we would learn of Him personally. But all have gone astray, and when we take up the history of mankind and view it in the various ages and among the various races of men, we find that they have all been prone to do evil; that the great bulk of the human family, at any rate, have loved darkness rather than light; that they have loved error rather than truth, and that they have been led by the Evil One rather than by the spirit which comes from the Father. When Jesus Christ came upon the earth, He told the people that if He had not come among them, they would not have had sin, but now that He had come among them they had no cloak for their sin. Why? "Because," said the Savior, "light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And as Christ came in the meridian of time to reveal the Father to the children of men, so far as they could understand Him, so at different times during the world's history God has sent holy men, inspired of the Holy Ghost, men authorized of Him to declare His word to the people that they might have life, that they might, if they pleased, choose the light and walk therein, or choose the darkness and walk therein.

But how has it been with those holy men? Have the people of the world generally received them? Have they welcomed them and their testimony? Have they hailed with joy the messengers from the Holy One, bringing light and truth and glad tidings of great joy? No. We find when we come to investigate the matter, that in all ages of the world the prophets of God have been rejected of men. Jesus, the Son of God, had to say to the people in His day, "which of the prophets have not your fathers slain?" and He told the people of His day that upon them would come "all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar. Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." Why? Because they had the testimony of those previous prophets, they had the testimony of those holy men who had come in former ages, and they could see, by reading the history of the past, how wickedly mankind had rejected the servants of God, and yet, when the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came right into their own midst they rejected Him, and in rejecting Him they also rejected the prophets which were before Him, who predicted His coming, and the blood of all was to come upon that generation. This is how it has been in all ages of the world, the prophets have been rejected. If a man came who flattered the people, who spoke the enticing words of man's wisdom, or according to the learning and science of the age in which he came, they would receive him with open arms, they would welcome him to their hearts, they would receive his teaching, they would feast and applaud him, they would clothe and feed

him and make him rich. But if a man came with the word of the Lord, with authority from the Holy One, to minister in the name of the Most High, they would reject him and put Him to death. Take up the Bible and read the history of the old prophets. What was their fate? Why, just as Paul tells us in his epistle to the Hebrews. They were stoned, sawn asunder, beheaded, persecuted, counted as not fit to live save it was in dungeons and caves of the earth; they were afflicted, tormented and rejected.

Some people who live in these times say, perhaps, "Oh, but if we had lived in those days we would have received the servants of God, we would have hearkened to the voice of the prophets, we would have rejoiced to hear the words of men sent of God, men holding authority from the Most High, men who could communicate with the heavens, we would have looked upon them as deliverers from our doubts, from our darkness, from our divisions, from our strife, from our lack of knowledge." Would you be sure of that? If you had lived upon the earth in the day when Jesus Christ came, how would you have told that Jesus was really the Christ? How would you have found it out? The people to whom He came rejected Him. There was no special mark set upon Him by which mankind could discern that He was the Christ. There was only one way by which it could be found out whether Jesus was the Christ or not. And what was that way? Why, by revelation from God, and if you and I had lived in these times and did not believe in revelation from God, how should we have found out that Jesus, of Nazareth, was the Christ? We read in the disciples on one occasion asked by Jesus Christ, "Whom men say that I the Son of Man am?" And they said, some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am. And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Now, how did Peter find that out, when those wise men, those Pharisees, those doctors, those lawyers, the expounders of the Mosaic law, the men that were looked up to by the Jews as lights of learning, men that had studied the holy Scriptures and made the teaching of them a profession, men that prayed long prayers on the corners of the street and had passages of scripture sewed upon the hem of their garments—how was it that Peter found out that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and the rest of the people could not find out? "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What rock? "Peter," some body will say. The name of Peter—Cephas, signifies a stone, and people think that Christ built His church upon Peter. Well, if He did He built it on a poor foundation for it was only a little while after this, in accordance with the prediction of Jesus, that Peter was put under a severe trial which caused him to deny the Lord that bought him. The people declared that Peter was along with those that were with Jesus and he denied the accusation and swore that he never knew Him. Well, it was upon this rock of revelation that the Lord would build His church. It was by revelation that Peter knew that Jesus was the Christ. No man can find out that Jesus is the Christ except by the same spirit; no man can know that He is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. Now, there may be a great many people say that Jesus is the Christ. How do you know? "Well, I believe it." Why? Because have been brought up a Christian and therefore I believe it. But you know that Jesus is the Christ? No, you cannot know unless you have a revelation from God to that effect. You may believe that Jesus is the Christ, you may have been trained up in that belief, but you cannot know it unless God shall reveal it to you. It is only by the power of the Holy Ghost that this knowledge can come to the children of men, neither can knowledge come to any one concerning the things of God except by the same spirit.

Now this gift of the Holy Ghost, as I before remarked, is the greatest boon that can be conferred upon mortal men, because by it they can