

## DISCOURSE

BY

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DELIVERED

In the Salt Lake Assembly Hall,  
Sunday afternoon, March 4, 1893.

REPORTED BY GIBBS AND IRVINE.

Having been called upon this afternoon, to speak to this congregation, I earnestly desire that I may be so influenced by the spirit of truth that I may be able to bring forth such things as will be profitable for us to reflect upon. I feel that we are greatly blessed in being privileged to meet in this house, dedicated to the worship and service of our Heavenly Father, where we can attend to those things which are required of us, in peace and in unity of spirit, and receive instructions as the Holy Spirit may prompt.

We meet in the name of the Lord. All that we do should be done in the name of Jesus Christ, for so we have been commanded. The Church to which we belong is the Church of Jesus Christ. It is composed of people called Latter-day Saints, but it is Christ's Church. He has set it up, He has organized it, and all the principles and doctrines which have been made known to us have been revealed through Him. It is His work and He will watch over it and direct it and consummate it. And He has commanded us that we shall do all things in connection with our faith in His holy name, and in that way only will it be acceptable to our Heavenly Father; for all the blessings that come from our Father to us His children, will come to us through Jesus Christ. His is the only name given under heaven whereby man can be saved. The Gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached to every creature. For it would not be just for our Heavenly Father to condemn any of his creatures who did not believe in Jesus Christ, without giving them an opportunity of understanding who He is and what His commandments are. All people, then, must hear the Gospel and have an opportunity of receiving it or rejecting it. Jesus Christ sent out His Apostles, after His resurrection, to preach the Gospel to all the world in that day and generation, and they went forward and fulfilled the commandment which he gave to them. Since that time a great many false doctrines have been introduced into the world, and a great many churches have been established, according to the notions and ideas of men not authorized by the Lord Jesus, not accepted of Him, not recognized by Him in any way. They are the churches of men, and the doctrines preached therein, in a great many respects, are the doctrines and commandments of men. They are not of God. They are not recognized by Him. They are not acceptable to Him. And so with many ordinances which have been introduced since that day. Some men have introduced them in the name of Jesus Christ, but they were not authorized by the Lord to do so, and therefore He will not accept them, and they are of no benefit to the children of men so far as their salvation is concerned. But in the day and age in which we live the Lord Jesus has manifested Himself again, and has re-organized the Church which He set up in ancient days, in the same form and shape, with the same officers, with the same ordinances, with the same commandments, and with the same spirit, power, gifts and blessings. And in this Church, if we live under the inspiration of the spirit and attend to the duties and obey the commandments which He reveals, in the way He has pointed out, we will be accepted of Him, and that which His servants perform on the earth in His name in the way He has appointed, will be the same as though it was performed by Himself in person, and will be accepted of the Father, just the same as though performed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and what they seal on the earth will be sealed in the heavens, and what they loose on the earth will be loosed in the heavens, according to His word. We have this great blessing and privilege, then, in belonging to this Church, that we become the people of the Lord Jesus, the Saints of the Lord, members of the Church of Christ, not members of any church made by a man, or a set of men, but the true church of the living God, established by Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we offer up our sacraments

before Him in the way He has appointed, they will be accepted by Him, and we will receive the benefits that result from properly attending to these things.

At the present time there are a great many different sects professing to be the churches of Christ. A great variety of doctrines are taught therein. Generally speaking these doctrines are supposed to be taken from the book called the Bible. Ministers usually read a portion of scripture either from the Old Testament or from the New Testament, and preach discourses therefrom. But although these different religions and these different discourses are supposed to be taken from the one book, yet they are very conflicting. The notions and ideas of one sect in regard to the things contained in the book, differ from those that are entertained by another sect, also professing to be the church of Christ. And even in each of these various sects the people do not all believe alike. They do not understand alike the doctrines that pertain to their particular sect. For instance, the people in what is called the Methodist church do not all believe alike. The people of the Baptist church do not all believe alike. There is not only a difference existing between the Baptist and the Methodist, but the Methodists differ among themselves, and Baptists differ among themselves; and so with the rest of all the different sects in Christendom. The reason of this is because they have no real and definite standard. They take the Bible—or rather profess to take the Bible as their standard; but their ideas concerning the Scriptures differ. They do not all understand the Bible alike. If they all understood the Bible alike there would be a unity of faith; but their ideas differ in regard to the meaning of the things contained in the Bible. At the present time there is a great controversy going on in the Christian world in regard to the manner in which this book should be read, and in regard to its authority. Some claim that every word in the book is inspired; that the word contained in the Bible must be relied upon implicitly as the very word of God. Others dispute this, deny the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and some of them think the Book should be regarded in the same light as secular history. And so the notions and ideas concerning the Bible are very varied. Outside of the Bible they have no standard. We may perhaps except the church called the Roman Catholic Church. That church has a standard in the person of the supreme head of the church—the Pope, the traditions, and the decisions of the councils of the church. But neither the Roman Catholic Church, nor the Episcopal Church, which has come out from it, nor any of the sects which have come out from the Episcopal Church, have any inspired standard among them save and except the things that were written of old contained in the Bible, which they do not comprehend alike. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we have something besides the written word. We have the living oracles of God, men that have been called and ordained and set apart to minister in Christ's stead, men in whom the Lord has placed His spirit, and not only His spirit, but His authority that they may act in His name; and they have access unto Him. It is their privilege not only to expound the things that were written of old which have been preserved and placed on record, and which are contained in the books of the Bible, but also to receive intelligence from the same source from which these things that are inspired that are in the Book were given. The same fountain from which the Prophets of old partook is open to us, and the servants of God in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can learn the mind and will of God respecting us as it exists in His own bosom, because the fountain of revelation is not dried up. Access is open unto our Heavenly Father as it was in times of old; and if Peter could learn the word of the Lord and teach it to the former-day Church, so the servants of God holding a similar position to-day can call upon the Lord and receive His word and declare it to the latter-day Church. If the Prophets of God of old wrote and spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, there are Prophets of God living upon the earth to-day who can speak and write as they are moved upon by the same power. And the word of God that comes down from heaven in our day

is just as authoritative as the word of God that came in times of old and that is written in the old books, and it is of much more importance to the people called Latter-day Saints, because it comes direct to them from our living head. It does not come in any ambiguous phraseology; it does not come in a shape that would leave it open to controversy; but it comes to us clear, plain and straightforward, so that all may understand. We have the benefit of the living oracles; not only the words of the oracles that are dead, but the words of those that are living.

And we find when we come to investigate the things that God makes manifest in our own day through the living oracles, that in spirit and in doctrine they correspond with the things that God revealed in days of old. We, then, have "a more sure word of prophecy" than the things that were written aforetime. The Apostle Peter spoke of this in his day. He said that holy men of God wrote and spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. He said, further, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." They had the living oracles. The people who lived in Peter's day had not only the words of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the other prophets, and the Book of the Law, as written by Moses, the inspired prophet of God; who looked upon God and talked with Him face to face—they not only had these things written in the ancient records, but they had living oracles, men in their midst who were authorized to speak in the name of the Lord and declare to the people the living word of God for their present benefit. And as it was with the people in that day, so it is in this Church that Jesus Christ our Savior has re-established on the earth. We have the living oracles, those who are called and ordained to stand between us and the Lord. And in addition to all this we have the great privilege of the Holy Ghost universally diffused throughout the body of the Church for the benefit of every member thereof; for every man and for every woman, for every individual who has been baptized into it and has received its ordinances. Every person in the Church may receive of this spirit which is the light of God, which is the spirit of inspiration, which bears record of the things of God, and makes plain to all who have it the things that God reveals through the living oracles. If a servant of God speaks or writes under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the same spirit by which He writes or speaks is in the members of the church, and it is their privilege to see as He sees, to comprehend as He comprehends, that we may all see "eye to eye" and understand the things of God alike.

Some people have an idea that it is impossible to bring a great number of individuals to understand religion exactly alike. People sometimes point to the difference that there is in human character. It is true that our characters vary, as do our countenances. The faces that are before me to-day are all different, although we are all of the same race. We are all different in our appearance. Even brothers and sisters of the same family differ in their appearance in some respects. So it is with all things that God has made. It is not only so in regard to the human family, but it is so with the brute creation. No two blades of grass are exactly alike. No two leaves upon the trees in the forest are exactly alike. No two worlds that God Almighty has made that glitter in the firmament on high at night are exactly alike. There are some peculiarities about each of them, distinct and different from others. This is all true. But is it impossible to bring people who are thus organized, people of different characters and different minds, to see and comprehend exactly alike? No, there is no difficulty about it when the thing is properly understood. Take any of what are called the exact sciences, and people can be brought to understand them just exactly in the same way. Take a sum in arithmetic, for instance. When a dozen people understand the rules in the same way they will work out the sum in the same way, no matter where they were born, nor what language they speak. When they understand the principle and rule that govern the workings of the

sum they all work it out in the same way, and what a dozen or a hundred can do a million can do. It makes no difference about the number. If all understand the principle alike they will work it out alike, and the result will be exactly the same. Why cannot this be done in those things called religious? It is true that religious principles are not governed altogether by the same rules and laws as those which govern secular things. But yet if people are in possession of the same spirit, and the truth is made clear before their understanding, they can all be brought to see exactly alike, and we have proven this in our own experience. For instance, when the Gospel of Jesus Christ came to us, it found us when we were scattered abroad in different nations. We have people here from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and from different parts of the European continent; from Sweden, Norway, Germany, Italy and from the various cantons of Switzerland; a great many from the various States of America, from the islands of the sea, from the East Indies, from Africa—people from all quarters of the globe. Now, when the Gospel came to us, it found us in a scattered condition. We lived in different countries, we spoke different languages; we had different ideas in regard to God and His ways. But we were taught that we must believe in the true and the living God; that we had all sprung from Him; that He was our Father, and that we were made in His image; that the idea prevalent to the world that the Deity is a being without body, parts or passions, an incomprehensible nonentity, was altogether wrong. We were told that we had sprung from God, and being His offspring we were like Him, and that, therefore, in some respects He is like us; that He is a personage, and as every seed begets its own kind, and we are the offspring of God, we could form some conception of what He is like, and we put away our old ideas. We came to a unity of the faith concerning God, that He is an individual; that although He is a spirit, yet He dwells in a tangible tabernacle. Man is a spirit as well as God, because we have sprung from Him. The spiritual part of our being is the offspring of God, which spiritual part dwells in our natural part that has come from the dust. In this way we could form some idea concerning the Deity, and we all formed the same idea; we all came to the unity of the faith in this respect. We were also taught that in order to repent acceptably before God we must come to the determination in our minds to leave off sinning, to cease doing that which is wrong, and to get to understand and do what is right. Then we were taught that in order to receive remission of sins we must be baptized. Now there were different notions in regard to baptism in the world. Some people believed that the marking of the sign of the cross with a little water on the forehead by a priest was baptism. Others believed that sprinkling water upon the face was baptism. Others that it was needful to immerse the whole body in water to constitute baptism, and still others that a person ought to be immersed three times. But we were taught that baptism was at once a burial and a birth; that in order to be properly baptized the person who administers the ordinance should have authority from God, because he uses the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and he has no right to use the names of the holy trinity without being expressly authorized of God to do so. We learned that in the first place, then, an individual who administers the ordinances must have authority to administer, and he must administer in the way that the Lord has appointed—not the way that man may think is right, but the way the Lord has ordained, or else it would not be acceptable to God. And we were taught that the individual to be baptized must believe and repent, for without faith and repentance baptism would be of no avail. So the individual who was baptized must be a repentant believer, and the individual who administered the ordinance must be an ordained servant of

God having legitimate authority from on high—not that which he had taken upon himself, not that which he may have called upon to do in his own house, but he must be a *bona fide* representative of Deity, a man called, ordained and set apart by authority from God to administer in His name, or it would not be valid. And the individual who baptizes must go down into the water with the person to be baptized—the candidate must be buried in the water in the likeness of Christ's death and burial, and then be raised out of the water in the likeness of His resurrection, and the object of this for the remission of sins.

This was very different from doctrines which prevailed in the world. But when this was taught to us in plainness, and we were baptized in this way, we received a testimony in our hearts that we were made clean, that our sins were forgiven, that they had been washed away—not by the water, but through our obedience to the ordinance which God had established and the blood of Jesus Christ, which was shed for the remission of our sins. We had the conviction sealed on our hearts that we had received a blessing. As the result thereof we were thus brought to the unity of the faith. Then when the servants of God laid their hands upon us, according to the pattern revealed in heaven, and conferred upon us the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, we received the same spirit from the same Holy Ghost. The people who received this ordinance in Scandinavia had the same spirit put down upon them as the people who received it in England or in Ireland, and the people on this Western Hemisphere on which we live received the same spirit, as the people received on the Eastern Hemisphere. In every part of the globe wherever this ordinance was administered the same spirit rested on the people and bore the testimony to them. Now, although there are a variety of operations of this spirit, yet the spirit is the same, and the light that it brings is the same. People do not all receive that light to the same degree; the light is the same, just as the light of the sun is the same, but some people can see a great deal further than others with their natural eyes. Their eyesight is better, but the light by which both is the same. So it is with regard to the gift of the Holy Ghost. People do not receive it in the same degree, because they are not all endowed with the same capacity, but they have not the same desire; the difference is not in the spirit, but in the individual. Some people are very earnest after the things of God, and he who seeks finds, and more he seeks in the right direction the more he finds. He that is tory in searching after the things of God, obtains but little; he that is diligent obtains much. All may receive it, but they must obtain it the way that God has appointed, receiving their measure according to their diligence and desire; but the spirit is the same. And this has operated upon our hearts in a way as to make us—a people—verse feelings and opinions of heart and one mind in regard to this matter. And wherever the Gospel has been preached and people have received it, they have been brought to a "unity of the faith." They no longer have many faiths and many baptisms, but one faith, one baptism and one God, having commenced to walk in the same straight and narrow way that leads to life, and which is the only way of salvation. And all people who desire to enjoy the fullness of His glory walk that straight and narrow way "for wide is the road, and broad the gate that leads unto death, many there be," we are told, "go in thereat." There is only one way of life, only one plan of salvation, because there is but one God to serve. If there were many gods to worship, there might be many different ways to salvation; but there is only one God, there be but one Gospel, one Church, one gate leading to the celestial glory. I have shown that it is possible for a great many people of different ideas and notions to be brought to understand things alike. This can be done in regard to our four things (I have named the principles, it can be done in a lion or any number of principles). And we are told in the scriptures that the time is to come when all shall see eye to eye; because we shall know God from the least to the greatest. There is, too, a time to come when the Holy Spirit will