

DISCOURSE

Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, at the Quarterly Conference of the Salt Lake Stake, Salt Lake City, September 1, 1889.

REPORTED BY GEORGE F. GIBBS.

I feel thankful that I have the privilege of assembling in this Tabernacle with my friends, the Latter-day Saints, to partake of the Lord's Supper, the emblems of His body and blood, His body which was broken for us and His blood which was shed for us. I regard this as a great privilege. While meeting with the Saints upon occasions of this kind I often reflect upon their spiritual condition, and hope and pray that those of us who are thus favored to commemorate the death and sufferings of our Lord and Savior by partaking of the Sacrament, may so live that we may be worthy to eat and drink with Him at the great marriage supper of the Lamb, in company with the prophets and patriarchs and Saints of God of former and latter days whom the Father hath given unto Him—those who have obeyed the law, received the truths of the Gospel and kept His commandments.

I wish to say to the Latter-day Saints that every man holding the holy Priesthood, every man called to preside over the Church or any branch of it, is dependent upon the Lord for His Holy Spirit to guide and sustain him. We have found the exhortation of the Savior to the apostles of His day applicable to our own labors and experience wherein He said, "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take no thought how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." We differ from many people in this regard. We very often call upon the Elders from among the congregation to come to the stand to speak without any preparation. We all, in a measure, occupy this same position before our fellow men. I never know when appearing before an assembly of the Saints what I may say to them; I leave entirely all these matters with the Lord. If the Lord gives me nothing, I shall certainly have but very little to say to the people. And this is the position that the Elders are placed in as teachers in Israel. My feelings and views are that the Lord never did have a people from Father Adam to the present time that were called upon to build up His Kingdom and establish His Zion in the world, or to preach the gospel of repentance to the children of men, but what they were dependent entirely upon the God of heaven for their support.

The Lord has told us by revelation to speak as we may be moved upon by the Holy Ghost. When a man speaks as he is moved upon by the Holy Spirit, what he says is the word of the Lord; it is the mind of the Lord, it is scripture, it is the will of the Lord, it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that

believes. Why? Because the Holy Ghost is one of the personages of the Godhead. God the Father and God the Son possess tabernacles, and God himself has created man after His own image; but the Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit, which bears witness of the Father and Son unto the children of men.

With regard to the rights of the human family I wish to say that God has given unto all of His children of this dispensation, as He gave unto all of His children of previous dispensations, individual agency. This agency has always been the heritage of man under the rule and government of God. He possessed it in the heaven of heavens before the world was, and the Lord maintained and defended it there against the aggression of Lucifer and those that took sides with him, to the overthrow of Lucifer and one-third part of the heavenly hosts. By virtue of this agency you and I and all mankind are made responsible beings, responsible for the course we pursue, the lives we live, the deeds we do in the body. I will repeat here what I have often remarked as the words and sentiments of the Prophet Joseph who once declared it in my hearing. Said he, "If I were ruler or emperor of the world, and I had power over the whole human family, I would make every man, woman and child free in the enjoyment of his or her religion, be that religion whatever it may." These are my sentiments. All people under heaven by virtue of their agency, whether living under a republican, a monarchical or any other form of government, are entitled to religious freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, they being held accountable to God alone for the use they make of their agency. And while we, as a community, accord this right and privilege to man the world over, we claim the same right ourselves. For we profess to believe in the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which God has revealed through the ministrations of angels sent unto the servants of God in the dispensation in which we live. It was made known to John the Revelator and to others of the Prophets and Apostles that in the last days, among the many great events which were to take place before the coming of the Son of Man, the everlasting Gospel would be restored to the earth. Referring to this event the Apostle says: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him: for the hour of His judgment is come." As Latter-day Saints we believe that angels visited Joseph Smith whom God raised up, and delivered unto him the fullness of the Gospel; and that he was ordained under the hands of heavenly messengers who held the keys of the Holy Priesthood and also the Priesthood after the order of Aaron.

Nearly sixty years have passed

and gone since this Church was organized. It has fallen to my lot to be associated with this people for the last 56 or 57 years of my life. I traveled with Joseph Smith and the Apostles and with many who are now in the spirit world, hundreds and thousands of miles laboring for the salvation of our fellow men. We are very differently situated today from what we were in the early days of this Church. We now occupy permanent homes in the valleys of these Rocky Mountains. I came here with Brigham Young when the country was a barren desert. The record of our lives for the last forty years, during which time we have been here, is before the world as history. The aim and object of our lives today are what they were in the beginning, namely the building up of the Kingdom of God upon the earth. And I wish to bear my testimony to the Latter-day Saints and to the world that this Gospel of the Kingdom which the angel of God delivered unto Joseph Smith will be preached as a witness to all the world before the end come. It is the same Gospel that was preached by Christ and the Apostles, and which the Jews rejected. There is but one Gospel plan of salvation, and it is eternal and everlasting in its character; it cannot be perverted or changed with impunity; hence the Apostle Paul has said in this connection, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." What was the Gospel taught by Paul, and by Peter, James and John? The first principle of the Gospel they taught was faith in God; the next was repentance of sins, and then baptism for the remission of sins. Jesus Himself was baptized of John, that he might fulfil all righteousness, because baptism was a righteous law, and one of the ordinances of the everlasting Gospel. At first John declined to baptize the Savior, recognizing the fact that He was without sin, and that baptism was for the remission of sin. But Jesus answering said, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." And He baptized the Savior and Redeemer of the world. As soon as this ordinance was attended to the heavens acknowledged the act by the manifestation of the Holy Ghost. And the next ordinance after baptism is the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. This was the Gospel taught by the Apostles while they lived. The Holy Ghost gave unto men a testimony that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Redeemer of the world; and it was a guide to their feet and a lamp to their path during their whole lives. The Church at first was organized upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief corner stone. We are told that Christ has set in the Church, "First apostles, secondarily prophets;" that "He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers;" and they were to be standing