

There have been dispensations pertaining to time, and these dispensations have generally been of short endurance. The wickedness of the world has been such as to drive those holding authority and power to administer in the various dispensations, from the earth; and the systems of men have been instituted in the stead thereof, and our earth has been left, from time to time, overwhelmed with the darkness, confusion, jars, and discords of men-made systems of religion; and the people have been shut out for many generations from the true light of heaven.

What has been the condition of the people for some seventeen centuries past on the great eastern hemisphere? We have often told you that the ancient church was destroyed from the face of the earth; that the authority of the priesthood of heaven was taken from the earth; that no such a thing as a christian church, with all its authority and power, as it stood upon the earth in ancient days, has existed for generations and ages that are past. This we have proved to the people from time to time; and we have showed them that this state of things has taken place in fulfillment of prophecy; hence, the people who died during these dark ages, have gone down in ignorance of the law by which they are to be judged, in ignorance of the authority and power of the gospel, in ignorance of the Christian religion; they, having only a history of it, had no one authorized to administer it; they could barely read what it was in ancient days, and that was all.

Were not those ancient fathers of ours as good, in many respects, as we? and if they had had the same opportunities we enjoy, would not many or them have embraced the gospel as well as we? If they are not permitted to hear the gospel in the eternal worlds, could they not come up before the Judge of all the earth, and say, you are a partial Being; you are judging us by a law we never heard of, condemning us for something we never had the opportunity of receiving.

They would have the right to plead this excuse before the great bar of judgment. But that they may be left without excuse, before the bar of God, in the last dispensation of the fullness of times, God will send a holy messenger from heaven, called Elijah the Prophet, to give power to chosen vessels on the earth to officiate in the ordinances of that gospel in their behalf; thus, the hearts of the children will be turned towards their fathers; otherwise, the children must also perish with their fathers, and all flesh would be smitten with a curse; why? because we have the power given unto us from heaven to feel after our fathers, and yet we will not do it; consequently, we would be cursed, and we could not escape from it.

Though the gospel may be revealed to us, we cannot partake of it, and enjoy its principles, and neglect the fathers; that is a duty enjoined upon the children in the last dispensation—that is the duty enjoined upon us and by no less a personage than the one I have named. That prophet who had such great power while he remained on the earth—that had power to call down fire upon his enemies—that had power to call fire from heaven and consume the sacrifices, that prophet who was wafted to heaven in a chariot of fire, that same august personage has been sent from the eternal worlds with this important message to the children that we might extend a helping hand to our fathers that are dead, that they might be benefited, as well as we, by the great plan of human redemption.

Now the great and grand question to be understood by us, is—wherein do the children benefit the fathers? in what respect, how, and in what manner are their hearts turned to them? and also on the other hand—in what way can the fathers benefit the children? for not only the hearts of the children have to be turned to the fathers, but the hearts of the fathers are to be turned to the children: both of these objects are to be accomplished in the great mission given to Elijah.

Let us first inquire—in what way are the children that are upon the earth, to be benefited by their fathers that are dead? I have already told you. Had it not been for the fathers that are dead, where would have been the priesthood?

Could we have got it from the church of Rome? No; for it never was restored to them. Is there any possible way by which the people, calling themselves Latter Day Saints, could have been benefited by the authority and priesthood of heaven, unless it were through our fathers who were sent from heaven, holding the authority and conferring it upon the children, that they might officiate in behalf of those who died without the knowledge of the gospel? There is no other way; and this is the way we obtained it; and we have certainly been benefited by it, and the hearts of our fathers, holding the priesthood, have really and truly been turned unto us.—While they lived upon the earth, they looked down through the dark vista of ages and beheld their children in the last dispensation, and the work they were to accomplish. They beheld the time when all things in heaven and on the earth, that are in Christ, should be gathered together in one; and they called it the dispensation of the fullness of times; in other words, a dispensation that includes all other dispensations. Do you understand that? For instance, the former dispensations that have been upon this earth, have been dispensations only in part; they were calculated in their nature to accomplish certain objects upon the face of the earth, but they never embraced the fathers and the children down to the end of time.

In the last dispensation of the fullness of times, all other dispensations will be consolidated; it will be the winding up dispensation of this earth, introduced before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. It will be a dispensation that will take hold of the fathers, back to the earliest ages of the world. It will be a dispensation in which the keys that were committed to the apostles in ancient days will be delivered to chosen ones; a dispensation in which all the keys and powers, held by all the ancient prophets will be delivered, a dispensation that will reach back unto the days

of Moses, and that will take hold of patriarchal keys, and the righteous institutions of those that lived in the days of the flood, and back to the days of our father Adam; and there will be keys and powers restored once revealed to him. All these dispensations could not be perfected without the grand dispensation of the fullness of times that will encompass all the inhabitants of the earth, of all ages and generations in one vast general assembly—all things in heaven, recollect, and all things on the earth that are in Christ are to be gathered in one.

Did any other dispensations accomplish this? Contemplate the works of all past dispensations, and you will find all were not gathered in one.—It is true they were gathered from time to time in the heavens, to wait there, for the time, when all the righteous of this globe should be gathered into one vast assembly, the fathers with the children, and the children with the fathers; the one could not be perfected without the other.

Herein, then, both the fathers and the children are interested and the children are benefited through the assistance of the keys handed down from heaven by the fathers; and on the other hand, that portion of the fathers who died in ignorance, are benefited by the assistance of the keys committed into the hands of the children who will officiate in their behalf.

But now let us come to particulars in regard to this subject: how do the children officiate in behalf of the fathers? We can officiate while in the flesh so far as ordinances are concerned. We cannot believe for our fathers; we cannot repent for them, we cannot receive the Holy Ghost for our fathers; and we cannot attain to any other point pertaining to the mind or the spirit of man.

Wherein, inquires one, can we benefit our fathers? if we cannot repent for them, nor believe for them, nor receive the Holy Ghost for them? In what manner can we benefit them? I will tell you what we can do. We can be baptized for the dead. Can it be possible that there is such a principle? Turn to the 15th chapt. of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, where you can read the words of the Great Apostle upon the subject of baptism for the dead. 'Els,' said he, 'what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptised for the dead?'

He understood the matter; it was all plain before him; and he was writing to a people who understood it: they had received previous instructions, although these words are contained in what is called Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, and in this first epistle we read that he had written another epistle to that same people; but that is lost. If we had that first epistle which Paul refers to in what is now termed the first epistle, we should probably find this doctrine fully revealed, for he wrote to them as though they understood all about it. He could with propriety have addressed them in a style something like this: You Corinthians have received the ordinance of baptism for the dead; you have gone forth and been baptized for and in behalf of the dead; you have been buried in water in the likeness of Christ's death, and raised from it, in the likeness of his resurrection, in behalf of the dead. And now in as much as you understand it, what will you do, if the dead rise not at all? as much as to say, that baptism will give you a full and clear title to come forth in the morning of the first resurrection; and also your dead can rise in the morning of the first resurrection in as much as you have been baptized for them: but if the dead are not raised from their graves, neither you nor they can be benefited by baptism.

This is the argument of Paul. This looks consistent. Those spirits of our fathers whose bodies are in their graves, can repent; for they have not lost their agency; they can believe in Jesus Christ; for that is an act of the mind: they can reform from every evil, because they are agents; for it is the spirit that can do good or evil. That same being, called the spirit, can repent in the eternal worlds as well as here, it can believe in Jesus Christ, and in his atonement, in the eternal worlds as well as here; and, if the gospel is preached to them there, they can receive it there, so far as the acts of the mind are concerned: but they could not receive baptism there, for that is an ordinance pertaining to the body; it is an outward ordinance—an ordinance—instituted particularly for those that are in the flesh.

Baptism is for the remission of the sins of those who are in the body; and it is the same for the generations of the dead, if their sins are to be forgiven through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ; the conditions of forgiveness are the same in the spirit world as here; namely: baptism for the remission of sins. But, inasmuch as they have not the opportunity of being baptized in that spirit world, some person else must officiate for them in their behalf. What power and authority do the servants of God justly receive who administer here on the earth? Do they administer as persons that have no authority? Do they officiate as having received authority from man? Do they assume authority? Is this the kind of authority with which the true servants of God administer in ordinances? No. The authority committed into the hands of the servants of God, in all dispensations of the gospel, is the power to bind on the earth, and it is bound in heaven; to seal on the earth and is sealed in heaven; to loose on the earth, and it is loosed in the heavens, and whosoever sins they remit here on the earth, they are to be remitted in the heavens; and whosoever sins they retain here upon the earth, they are retained against those individuals in the heavens. This is the authority of the servants of God in all dispensations of the gospel from the earliest ages of the world, until the present time. Any authority which does not embrace this power in the ministrations of ordinances, is altogether useless, and in vain. Baptism, received at the hands of any unauthorized person, is good for nothing.

When the children of men here in the flesh receive the gospel for themselves, they are baptised for the remission of sins, and receive the fullness of gospel and the hope of eternal life in

the kingdom of God, for themselves; when they also have a dispensation committed to them for the benefit of their fathers who are dead; unless they exercise their agency in trying to benefit the fathers, they will, as Malachi predicts, be smitten with a curse; they will not be profited themselves by the gospel which they have received. Why? because they do not reach forward and try to reclaim others, whose bodies are sleeping in the grave.

The Latter Day Saints have had this subject revealed to them; and the great God that sent his angel to Joseph Smith, to give him power and authority to translate the history of ancient America with the gospel and prophecies contained in it, has spoken to the same man, revealing to him the keys of Elijah, and power to seal on earth that which shall be sealed in the heavens; therefore, when, by that authority, the servants and handmaids of the Lord go forth and are baptized for those that are dead, it is recorded and sealed on the earth. The administrator who officiates for and in behalf of the dead, does it by authority. He says: having authority given me in the name of Jesus Christ, I baptize you for and in behalf of your father, of your mother, of your grandfather, or of any of your ancestors, as the case may be, that are dead, and I do this in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. This is recorded in the sacred records kept on the earth; and the recording angel who takes cognizance of the ordinances on the earth, makes a record of the same in heaven. I do not know but Elijah himself may be the recording angel for eternity.

The sacred books kept in the archives of eternity are to be opened in the great judgment day, and compared with the records kept on the earth; and then, if it is found that things have been done by the authority and commandment of the Most High, in relation to the dead, and the same things are found to be recorded both on earth and in heaven, such sacred books will be opened and read before the assembled universe in the day of judgment, and will be sanctioned by him who sits on the throne and deals out justice and mercy to all of his creation. Our fathers who are in the spirit world must have a message sent to them. What benefit would it be for you and I to go forth and be baptized for our fathers, or for our grandfathers, or for any of our ancestors who are dead if no message is to be sent to them in the spirit world? A message must be sent to them.

There are authorities in heaven as well as upon the earth; and the authorities in heaven are far greater in number, than the few who are upon the earth. This is only a little branch of the great tree of the priesthood, merely a small branch receiving authority from heaven, so that the inhabitants of the earth may be benefited as well as the inhabitants of the eternal world; but the great trunk of the tree of the priesthood is in heaven; there you will find thousands and millions holding the power of the priesthood—there you will find numerous hosts of messengers to be sent forth to benefit the numerous nations of the dead. They go forth, having authority; they enter into the prison houses of the dead; they open their mouths by authority and commandment of the Most High God; they preach to them Jesus Christ as a Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world; they show to the inhabitants of the dead, in their prison houses, that his atonement was intended to reach them, as well as people dwelling upon the earth. And in proof of this let me refer you to what the apostle Peter says, in relation to Jesus our great High Priest and Apostle who was sent forth by the commandment of the Father to our world; Peter says, that after he was crucified and put to death in the flesh, he went to preach to the spirits in prison which perished in the floods, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days Noah, while the ark was preparing.

We learn from this that Jesus has set the example; that he came forth while in the flesh to minister unto those in the flesh; and while his body slept in the tomb, and his spirit was separate from the same, he still felt himself authorized as an Apostle and High Priest to go to those prison houses, and open the prison doors and set the captives free. He found those old antediluvian spirits that existed on the earth some two thousand years before that time; he preached to them; and as Peter says in the next chapter, he preached the gospel to them; 'for for this cause was the gospel preached to them that are dead that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, and live according to God in the spirit.' They could not be judged by the same law, unless it was preached to them. The same gospel must be sounded in their ears that was sounded in the ears of the living. If they reject it in their prison houses, they will be punished by the same law you and I will be punished by, if we reject it in the flesh.

One of the powers of the priesthood is, that whatsoever you shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in the heavens. Now if a spirit does 'sincerely receive a messenger in that prison; if he believes his testimony and hearkens to all things that are said, if he believes that Jesus Christ has tasted death for every man, for those who die in ignorance, as well as for those who hear the gospel in the flesh, he will be informed that in yonder world, or in the world he came from, there is authority given for men and women to be baptised for such.

Those messengers, sent to preach in prison, will most likely interrogate the prisoners in language something like this:—Will you receive our testimony? Do you believe that Jesus Christ has tasted death for every man? Do you believe that through your repentance and faith, and through the ordinance of baptism in your behalf, by those that are living in yonder world, you may have a remission of your sins? If they believe it, and actually do repent, the ordinance of baptism administered here, in their behalf, will benefit them there. But says one, this being baptised for another looks rather inconsistent to

me. Why does it? Suppose a man is placed in a situation that he could not be baptised for himself, must his sins be retained unto him? Must he remain in prison throughout all ages of eternity, because he has lost his body, and has not the privilege of being baptised? Does that look inconsistent with the justice of God? Then why not another person administer in his behalf? How could you have atoned for yourselves? If it had not been for the agency of another being that acted for you, and in your behalf, you must have perished eternally. You had forfeited every right and title to the blessings of the kingdom of God; all mankind were shut out from the presence of God, and became dead as to things pertaining to righteousness; the sentence of the first death was placed upon father Adam and his children, which was irrevocable if there had been no atonement.

We would have had to lay down these bodies never to rise from the tomb, if there had been no atonement; our spirits would have been forever subject to that being that tempted our first parents, and we could not have helped ourselves; hence, the Son of God came forth and made an atonement, not for himself, but for and in behalf and in the name of his younger brethren, that they, through his blood, and through certain conditions of the gospel, might receive forgiveness of their sins; one of these conditions is baptism; but spirits are placed in a condition where they cannot receive this ordinance. And now, why not somebody have authority to go and administer for them and in their behalf? Not only Jesus has acted in behalf of the children of men, but it pertains to the same priesthood and apostleship, wherever it is placed, to act for and in behalf of the children of men; hence, Paul says, we beseech you, not in our own name, but in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. They came forth to officiate for the children of men, that could not help themselves without authorized ministers.

Just so, the dead could not help themselves without messengers being sent to them in their prison houses, and without persons in the flesh being authorized to receive gospel ordinances for them and in their behalf. How are we to know the individuals for whom we should be baptised? We know nothing about our ancestors very far back. We can, perhaps, go back to our grandfathers, and some of you may possibly trace your genealogies back seven or eight generations, and get the name of your ancestors. But when you get these, there is a still longer chain, with many links to it, before you get back where the chain has been mended up by ancient administrators. How can we be baptised for persons whose very names are lost? Do you suppose that the prophet Elijah would be sent from heaven with this great and important mission, to turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers, and then leave them in entire ignorance with regard to their genealogies?

If Elijah the prophet is to be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, you may be assured that we shall learn something about the genealogy of those fathers.

We shall learn, by the spirit of revelation, whom to be baptised for, and whom to officiate for in the holy ordinances of the gospel. Herein is the necessity of revelation. Take away revelation from this great dispensation of the fullness of times and I would not give you much for the mission of Elijah, or for the dispensation itself. Take away that great principle that always characterized all other dispensations, and you throw us into uncertainty on tens of thousands of important subjects.

But when a communication is opened between man and his Maker, and angels are sent down to restore their keys and their powers, light shines at once upon our path way. It may be asked, where are these ordinances to be attended to? Can we run over the world and pick up Saints here and there and baptise them for their dead? No. The house of God is a house of order; the kingdom of God is a kingdom of order, and every thing must be conducted with order, and with power and authority, so that when it is sealed on earth it is sealed in the heavens, that the records on earth and in heaven may agree, that the priesthood on earth and in heaven may agree, that they may be one.

These things cannot be attended to in all places on the earth. There are certain appointed places for the ministrations of these holy ordinances. Temples must be built, by the commandment of the Almighty, unto his holy name, that shall be sanctified and made holy from the foundation stone unto the top thereof, consecrated to the living God for the administration of holy ordinances, not only for the benefit of the living, but for the benefit of the fathers who are dead. But in what apartments in the temple shall the baptism for the dead be administered? It will be in the proper place, in the lowest story or department of the house of God. Why? Because it must be in a place underneath where the living assemble, in representation of the dead that are laid low in the grave: there a baptismal font must be erected by the commandment of the Most High, and after the pattern he shall give by revelation unto his servants; and in such a font this sacred and holy ordinance must be administered by the servants of God.

We will mention another thing in regard to the authority that receives these communications; every man will not be his own revelator in these matters, for there would be ten thousand revelators, and perhaps no more than five hundred of them would be true.

In the manifestation of spiritual gifts which God has given to his servants in all ages of the world, he has had those appointed with authority and power to discern which were from God and which were not. In the days of Moses there were many prophets; the spirit of prophecy rested upon seventy Elders of Israel on a certain occasion; and when Joshua saw some of them in