

THE DESERT WEEKLY

PIONEER PUBLICATION ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

ESTABLISHED TRUTH AND LIBERTY JUNE 1850.

NO. 10. SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 1892. VOL. XLV.

DISCOURSE

Delivered by President Joseph F. Smith, Monday, July 4th, at a Conference of the four Stakes of Zion in Arizona, held at Winslow, Apache County, Arizona.

In attempting to say a few words I desire an interest in your feelings and in your faith and prayers; for I am dependent upon the favor of the Almighty for what I shall say to you.

It is very pleasing to contemplate the work of God in which we are engaged. It is worthy of our most careful thought and attention; for it not only seeks to give us, by the spirit of inspiration, a knowledge of those principles which are necessary to our salvation and exaltation in the presence of God, but it seeks, by an organization which God has revealed and established in the earth, to discipline us and to give us experience and understanding in relation to the working and binding effects of those principles. The Gospel itself is a code of laws which originated in the heavens, and which is given to men on the earth to enable them to assimilate themselves to those who are in heaven, that in the observance of the laws and principles which they are governed by we may be like unto them and become fitted to dwell with them when we shall have done with the things of time. The principles of the Gospel are not only perfect in themselves, but the organization of the Church is also perfect in itself, and the order of government which God has instituted for His people is a pattern of that which is in the heavens.

We are told in the revelations that in this Church there are two priesthoods—the Melchisedec and the Aaronic; and this Aaronic Priesthood is an appendage to the Melchisedec Priesthood, which is the first or greater, and which is after the order of the Son of God. There are numerous offices connected with these two Priesthoods, such as Apostles, Patriarchs, High Priests, Seventies, Elders, Priests, Teachers and Deacons. The priesthood of Melchisedec holds the presiding power and authority; and by virtue of a man's possessing the keys and authority of the Melchisedec priesthood he is able to minister in all the lesser offices of these two priesthoods, because the greater always comprehends the lesser. We are also told that the office of a Bishop belongs to the lesser or

Aaronic priesthood; and that whenever there are found in the Church legitimate descendants of Aaron, then the Bishops will be chosen from his seed, because this office belongs to them by right. And when a literal descendant of Aaron is found to officiate in the office of Bishop, he will do so without counselors. But he will be chosen and ordained and set apart to officiate in this office by those who hold the Melchisedec priesthood. He will not be able to seize the office by reason of his being a descendant of Aaron, any more than a person is entitled to any office in the priesthood because he is born in the Church. All persons have to be set apart and ordained to these offices and callings by those who hold the authority. So that if there was a descendant of Aaron here whom it was thought proper to choose to fill the office of Bishop in the Church, and to sit as a common judge in the midst of the people, he would have to be called and ordained to that office, and set apart to officiate in it, by the presiding officers of the Melchisedec priesthood. The office of Bishop, or presiding officer in the lesser priesthood, is to look after and take care of the temporal affairs of the Church. Hence it becomes the duty of the Bishop to look after the gathering of the tithing of the people, and other contributions which are made for the building of temples and houses of worship, for the sending of the Gospel to the nations of the earth, for the gathering of the poor, for the maintenance of the ministry, for the support of the poor, to look after such as are in need and to minister unto them according to their necessities. But it is the duty of him who holds the High Priesthood, which is after the order of the Son of God, to preside over all the officers of the Priesthood and over all the members of the Church, when he is chosen and set apart to preside. For instance, the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is composed of three High Priests, who are chosen from the body of the High Priests, and who are sustained by all the Priesthood and members of the Church, and whose names are presented before the assembled congregations of the Saints every half year, for them to manifest their will, faith and confidence toward them as the presiding officers of the whole Church. It is their duty to preside over the Church. It is their duty to

preside over the Twelve Apostles. It is their duty to preside over all the High Priests, over all the Seventies, and over all the Stakes and wards of Zion. In fact, it is their duty to preside over all the branches of the Church in every land and clime. This presiding council is set apart for this purpose, and is sustained by the voice of the people, not only in the general conferences, half yearly, but in all the Stakes of Zion, at their quarterly conference. The presiding authorities of the Church are presented before the people that they may sustain or reject them, as they see fit.

The Twelve Apostles are a traveling High Council, called and appointed to officiate in the ministry and in the preaching of the Gospel of Christ in all the nations of the earth, as well as in the Stakes of Zion, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church. The Seventies are quorums each of Seventy Elders, who are chosen and ordained for the purpose of assisting the Twelve Apostles to carry the Gospel to the nations of the earth, wherever the Apostles have not power or time to carry it themselves. They are, therefore, auxiliary Elders, chosen to be assistants of the Twelve Apostles in spreading the Gospel, that Gospel may be preached to the people, that they may understand the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and that they may grow up in the knowledge of God and in an understanding of those principles which are calculated to save them, as Brother George Reynolds, one of the First Seven Presidents of the Seventies, has been preaching the first principles of the Gospel to us here this afternoon. These are all general authorities of the Church, and it is their duty to labor for the welfare of Zion everywhere, wherever they are called and appointed by their presiding officers to go.

Then we come to an organization which we call a Stake. This meeting is a gathering of Latter-day Saints who are members of four separate Stakes of Zion, located in Arizona. We have here the presidents of these four Stakes, with their counselors, and a number of the Bishops and other officers. We have come here to hold a conference, to teach and be taught, and to rejoice together in the truth. We have come to be taught in relation to our duties as Presidents of Stakes, as Counselors, as High Councilors, as Bishops, etc.