

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER CHAS. W. PENROSE,

DELIVERED

In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday afternoon, June 8th, 1884.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

Christ's last words on the cross—True faith in Christ exhibited by obeying his commandments—Popular belief that Christ has done everything needful—His work not finished on the cross—Present revelation and ancient scripture—Where was Jesus during the time between his death and his resurrection?—Preaching the gospel to the dead—Christ's resurrection—His body raised—He obtained the keys of hell and of death—He became "the resurrection and the life"—The other sheep of Israel's fold—Jesus among the Nephites—Their record, the Book of Mormon—His work among the lost ten tribes—Works yet future—The resurrection of all that are in their graves—The redemption of the earth—The victory over Satan—Meaning of, "It is finished." What mankind have to do to be saved—Essentiality of gospel ordinances—Recapitulation—Exhortation to good works.

I have been requested to address the congregation this afternoon, and arise to do so. I trust that I shall have the attention of the congregation and the faith and prayers of the Latter-day Saints, that the Spirit of God may rest upon me to enlighten my mind and suggest such thoughts to me as will be profitable for this congregation to reflect upon. The Elders of this Church have been commanded of the Lord to seek diligently for His Spirit, and when they are called upon to speak in the name of the Lord to speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and if they have not the Spirit they are not to teach. The Gospel in ancient days, the Apostle says, came not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration and power of the Spirit. The Latter-day Saints believe in that doctrine and look for the inspiration and whispering of the Holy Ghost in all their public exercises, and the servants of God in this Church have been led to understand fully that by their own wisdom and understanding, and learning, if they have any, they are not qualified to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It must be preached, if at all, under the influence of the Spirit that cometh from God and by which alone the things of God can be discerned. Yet at the same time they are commanded to "seek out of the best books words of wisdom," to seek for knowledge "by learning and by study and by faith," and to "treasure up in their hearts continually the words of life." The promise is given to them that when it is needful, the Spirit of God shall rest upon them and take of those things which they have treasured up in their hearts, and bring forth things both new and old for the benefit of those who listen to their words. I trust that this afternoon this good Spirit will not only rest upon the speaker, but upon the hearers, that we may all be edified together and that we all may be able to see eye to eye.

I will take a text of Scripture as a foundation for some remarks this afternoon, and if I am led by the Spirit of the Lord, will endeavor to convey some thoughts in connection with this passage. It will be found in the 30th verse of the Gospel according to St. John:

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the Ghost.

We are partaking this afternoon of bread and water in commemoration of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ our Savior, the bread representing His body, and the water, in lieu of wine, representing His blood. We do not use wine in the sacrament, because the Lord has told us not to use wine as a beverage, and not to use it in the sacrament except it be "pure wine of the grape of the vine, of our own make." Water being the purest element that exists on the earth, we use that in lieu of the wine, under the direction and approval of our Heavenly Father. We believe, therefore, in Jesus Christ, that is, in Jesus of Nazareth, who was called the Christ, and who died on Calvary, being put to death by the Jews—we believe in the atonement which Christ wrought out for the human family by the shedding of His blood; and in token of our belief we, on the sabbath day, or on the Lord's day, the first day of the week, break bread and drink water to commemorate His death and sufferings, to show him that we believe in Him; that we are willing to give evidences of our faith not only by words, but by our works; that we are willing to take upon us His name and keep the commandments which He has given to us, and also to show that we believe in His coming again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to reign over the face of the earth, and also in token of our fellowship one with another, as brethren and sisters, believing in the same God and in the same Savior, and looking for the same salvation. Now, while we believe in the atonement of Jesus Christ, in the great work which He wrought out for the human family, doing something for them which they were not able to do for themselves, at the same time we believe in keeping the laws and commandments and

counsels which Jesus Christ revealed in times of old, and which He has renewed to His Church in these latter times by present revelation. While we depend upon the shed blood of Christ that we may obtain the remission of sins, and enter into the Kingdom of our Lord, we also believe it is absolutely necessary to do those works that Jesus Christ has commanded. Our faith, then, is a faith that includes or is exhibited by works. We do not believe that that which is called faith—which simply consists of belief in Jesus, belief that He lives, belief that He died for the world—is sufficient. That is not a saving faith. We believe that that which will bring people to salvation is a faith that is exhibited in carrying out the commandments and counsels of Jesus Christ, and that this is the meaning of the text which says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But it is often claimed by professors of religion, and by professed teachers of religion, claiming to have authority to preach the Gospel, that Jesus Christ did all the work that is necessary for the salvation of the human family when He died upon the cross; that He finished His work on the cross, and, therefore, there is nothing left for the inhabitants of the earth to do. And in support of this idea this text I have just read to you is very often cited:

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, it is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost."

From this text the idea has gone forth into the world that this work that Christ performed upon the cross was the finale of the work of salvation, that nothing else remained to be done, that Christ has done it all; that he has finished His work for all the inhabitants of the earth, and all they have to do is to look to Him and they will be saved. Now, we regard this as a very great mistake, and we regard it so because of the commandments and revelations of God to the Latter-day Saints, in this age of the world. We believe in the Bible, the books of the Old and New Testament; but we do not take our faith from that book. We do not depend upon it for our ideas in regard to religion. The doctrines and principles which we believe have come down from God to us in this age of the world by present revelation; but they correspond with the doctrines taught by Jesus and by His Apostles in ancient times. And so we very often refer to the scriptures in proof of the truth of that which we teach. We, having received the Gospel in our own time by direct revelation from God, preach the doctrines that God has revealed, and refer to the old scriptures in truth of that which we advance.

Now, I will endeavor this afternoon, in the first place, to show you from the scriptures that Jesus Christ did not finish His work for the salvation of the human family when He died on the cross; that there was considerable to do and considerable was done, as we find on record. The meaning of this passage we will endeavor to understand before we get through.

Did Jesus Christ finish His work for the salvation of the race when He bowed His head upon the cross and gave up the ghost? No, we say, and I think the scriptures will bear us out in this view. On the third day after this occurrence, one of His disciples, a woman called Mary, was in the garden near where He had been buried, and a personage appeared there, whom she supposed to be the gardener. She had learned that the body of Jesus was no longer in the tomb; and she stepped forward to speak to this person whom she supposed to be the gardener to ask him where they had taken the body. Jesus—for it was Jesus himself—called her by name. She sprang forward as though to embrace Him, and He said, What?

"Touch me not, Mary, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God." John xx, 17.

Now, it appears from this that though Jesus Christ gave up the ghost, that He died on the cross, that His lifeless body was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb, He had not been to the Father." Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father." Now, the question arises, where was Jesus during the time that elapsed between His giving up the ghost and the time when He appeared to Mary in the garden on the third day? Where had He been? We know where His body was. His body was put in a sepulchre, in a new tomb hewn out of the rock in which no man had lain. A stone was placed at the door thereof and Roman soldiers were placed as guard. But where was Jesus, the real person, the intelligent being that came out of that body, the ghost, the spirit, the reality, the personality of Jesus? For the real man is the immortal spirit of man, and the real Jesus was that living being that came from the Father. Jesus declared He came forth from the Father and was going to the Father. In His prayer recorded by St. John He said: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." He had come and tabernacled in the flesh for a season. Where was He during the time His spirit was absent from His body? Let us read what the Apostle Peter says about it. [1st Epistle of Peter 3rd chapter, 18, 19 and 20 verses]

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

"By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

"Which sometime were disobedient when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

That is what Peter says in regard to the matter. Jesus was put to death in the flesh but quickened by the spirit, by which also He went somewhere. While His body was lying in the tomb Jesus went away. Where? Not to the Father. He was not yet ascended to the Father when He met Mary in the garden. Where did He go? He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah. Now, that is a new doctrine to the people of this generation, but it was an old doctrine to the ancient saints, and is a doctrine with which the Latter-day Saints are familiar; not from reading that text, but by the revelations of God through the Prophet Joseph Smith to them, by which they learn that departed spirits, people who have dwelt in the flesh and who have not had the privilege and opportunity of hearing the Gospel preached while they were alive, will, in the due time of the Lord, have the same Gospel that is preached in the flesh preached to them in the spirit world. If a people have lived upon the earth at a time or in a place where the Gospel could not reach them, they will hear it afterwards in the spirit world, and even those who had the opportunity of hearing the Gospel here in the flesh and have not received it, after they have suffered the vengeance of God in the place prepared in the eternal punishment (for the punishment is eternal, it always exists, but is meted out to the children of God as they deserve, some being beaten with many stripes, some being forgiven after they have suffered a certain portion of penalty, while others who sinned against light and knowledge must pay the uttermost farthing for their transgressions) after people have gone through this eternal punishment of God, then again they have an opportunity of receiving the Gospel, but they will never attain to that degree of glory, honor and exaltation in the presence of God that they might have attained unto had they received the truth when first presented to them.

Now, then, here was a people who lived upon the earth in the days of Noah. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. While the ark was preparing he preached to the people. We are told he preached 120 years, as you may find by studying the Book of Genesis and its chronology. But the people rejected his preaching. They rejected the truth which Noah brought to them, hence they were swept off the face of the earth. Where did they go? They went into prison, as the Apostle Peter calls it, and Jesus went and preached to them. What did Jesus preach to them? That is the next question. If He carried out the prophecy delivered by Isaiah, He went to preach deliverance to them. For the Prophet Isaiah spoke in regard to the Lord Jesus, who quoted the words of Isaiah on a certain Sabbath day when He went to the synagogue and "stood up for to read," and this is what He read:

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

According to that prediction of Isaiah, when Jesus went to preach to the spirits in prison He went to preach deliverance to the captives; to open the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Now, let us read a little further from the Epistle of Peter, 4th chapter, and 6th verse:

For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh but live according to God in the spirit.

Peter is speaking in regard to two classes of persons, as you will find in the 5th verse of this same chapter.

Who shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

He was speaking in regard to the quick, that is, those that were alive, and in regard to the dead, those that had gone into the spirit world. Then, says He, "For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead." For what cause? "That they might be judged according to men in the flesh." They were not men in the flesh, they were dead. The Gospel was preached to them that they might be judged the same as men in the flesh are judged, having heard the Gospel, and live according to God in the spirit. So Jesus having bowed His head and given up the ghost went and preached to the spirits in prison who were disobedient in the days of Noah. He preached the Gospel to those that were dead. He preached deliverance to the captive; and as the Apostle says, when He ascended up on high, "He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

Here is a work that Jesus Christ did after He bowed His head and gave up the ghost on the cross. His work was not finished. He would not have fulfilled the predictions concerning Him if His work had finished then. He went to the spirit world and preached to men in the spirit as He had preached to men in the flesh. As He established His Church upon the earth among men in the flesh, so He went into the spirit world and established His Gospel and Church there, so that those who had not heard the Gospel in the flesh might

hear it in the spirit. Now, this was a great work. Let us consider it for a moment. Jesus stayed upon the earth but a very short time, and His sphere of labor was very limited. His ministry lasted about three years; for He did not commence His ministry until He was thirty years of age, when He was baptized by John in the river Jordan. He went around about Palestine only. He did not go outside of the Holy Land; for as He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." His labors were confined to the Holy Land, in a very limited sphere; but He established His Church and Gospel there and ordained His Apostles that they might go out into the world.

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe.

So He said, as we find recorded in the last chapter of St. Mark. Now, as He preached on the earth and established His Church here, so He went into the spirit world and preached the Gospel there and established His Church there, which opened a far greater and more mighty work than that which He performed on the earth. Why? Because so many more millions of people exist in the spirit world than exist in the flesh. Only one generation lived on the earth when Christ ministered in the flesh, but all the generations of the departed were in the spirit world. He established His work among them, and opened a greater work in a wider field than He could possibly find on the earth, in the very nature of things. No doubt when He went there He took with Him the thief that repented on the cross, the thief who said, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." He did not go to the Father. He did not go into the Kingdom of heaven where some imagine the thief went. Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison, and no doubt the thief heard there with the rest of them. But leaving that part of the subject, is there anything else Jesus did after His death? Yes. After preaching to the spirits in prison, He took up His body, the same body that lay in the tomb. He said when He was upon the earth:

I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. John x, 17, 18.

And it was necessary in the work that He had to perform for the salvation of the race, that He should take up His body and become "the first fruits of them that slept." So, after His body had lain in the tomb for about three days, the angels came and rolled away the stone from the sepulchre. The Roman soldiers placed to guard the tomb fell down as if they were dead, and when they came to themselves they found the body had gone. Jesus Christ appeared in that body to His disciples as He appeared to Mary. He showed them that it was His body. Some have the idea that when a man dies and his spirit goes out of his body he is resurrected. That is not the case. He is not resurrected until his body is raised up. The departure of the spirit from the body is not the resurrection. Jesus took pains to make His disciples clearly understand this. They were gathered in secret for fear of the Jews—so we read in the Gospel according to St. John, xx chapter, 19—while thus gathered Jesus appeared unto them and said: "Peace be unto you." We read in Luke xxiv, 37 that

They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. But Jesus said unto them: "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." And while they believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them: Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it and did eat before them.

What for? To show them that He had taken up His body from the tomb. Thomas, who was not present on this occasion, would not believe when told that Jesus was raised from the dead. But after eight days again his disciples were gathered together and Thomas was with them, He appeared in their midst and said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands"—where the nails went through—"and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side"—where the spear was thrust in as He hung upon the cross—"and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas had to believe then, and Jesus said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Jesus, then, took up His body from the tomb. Some, perhaps, will object and say that according to St. Paul [1 Corinthians, xv, 50], "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." That is very true. But Jesus did not appear before them in a body of flesh and blood. His body was a natural one before He was crucified. When it was raised from the dead it was a spiritual body. He was quickened by the spirit. There was no blood in His veins. That was shed for the remission of sins. He came forth a spirit body. His body was quickened by spirit. It was not governed by the same laws that bound the mortal body for it was an immortal body. But ye it was a tangible body, a material body;

not in the same condition as the material of the old body, because it had been quickened and made spiritual. But the idea that a spiritual body is something that cannot be seen is incorrect. Spiritual substance is tangible, although not tangible in the same degree that our bodies are. It is matter, but a higher grade of matter. You cannot see it by the natural eye, but you can see it by the spiritual eye, and persons who have a spiritual body can make it visible, by the power of God, and by laws they understand, to persons who are in the natural body, if the persons in the natural body are quickened by the Holy Spirit for the purpose.

Jesus Christ, then, when He was raised from the dead was raised an immortal, spiritual body—a body that had flesh and bones—a body that could partake of all the good in the lower elements as well as the spirit can partake of the blessings of the higher elements. Such a perfected being can obtain from the heavens above, from the earth beneath, and from all the heights and depths of this great universe, all the joys and benefits and intelligence and glory that they contain. A spirit without a tabernacle can only enjoy certain blessings, while an immortal spirit in an immortal, celestial body, can enjoy all things. Jesus Christ became the first fruits of them that sleep. What for? That He might become the resurrection and the life. Here is great work yet to be done; for all that are in their graves are to hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth, as we read in the 5th chapter of John, as the 28th verse. Said the Savior:

Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.

But that work, the resurrection of the dead through Jesus Christ, who the resurrection and the life, is a work yet in the future, and does not belong to this branch of our subject. After He had preached to the spirits in prison, as I have said, He returned and took up His body, having the keys of hell and of death, as we read in the Book of Revelation, 1st chapter, 18 verse, when He appeared to John upon the Isle of Patmos He said:

I am He that liveth, and was dead; behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

How did He come in possession of them? By going right into the realm of Satan, the regions of the damned. He grasped the keys of hell, and came back, seized the keys of death and took up His body, and finally ascended to His Father, where He obtained all power both in heaven and on the earth.

Now, had Jesus Christ finished His work then? No. There is something else He performed that is not generally known. I will refer to the 10th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, 16th verse.

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be fold and one shepherd.

When the angels came and sang the birth of the Savior that we read in Luke ii, 8—14, while the shepherds watched their flocks at night, the burden of their song was, "Glory to thee in the highest, and on earth peace good will toward men." And the angel said, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Now, the gospel which Jesus preached in person, and which His Apostles preached in the region round about Palestine, was only delivered on one side of this globe, the eastern continent, and in a very small circle at that. At the same time there was a great continent existing far away—the land in which we now live. Were there people dwelling upon this land at the time when Jesus was in Jerusalem? Undoubtedly. The evidences of their existence can be found in many parts of this great continent. Their ruined cities have been discovered, and the travelers and antiquaries who have examined the relics have figured up that many hundreds of years ago a numerous people must have dwelt upon this land, an intelligent people, an industrious people, a civilized people to a great extent at least, and the American Indians, as we call them, appear to be the remnants left of those that lived before. Now, Jesus speaking to His Disciples, concerning His sheep, the sheep of Israel, in John x, 16, says:

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be fold and one shepherd.

The tidings of great joy concerning the birth of the Savior, and the coming of the Gospel, was to be to all people—"peace on earth and good will toward men." Were the builders of the ancient, ruined cities on the western continent at that time? Yes. Where had they come from? From Jerusalem where Christ and His Apostles administered. This land, the western continent, was not then discovered by the people of the eastern hemisphere. They knew nothing about it. Hundreds of years rolled away before any people living upon that continent (the eastern) knew of the existence of this land (the western), let alone of a people living upon it. Now, we have a book called the Book of Mormon, which was translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith; by the gift and power of God, from metallic plates, the existence of which was revealed to him by an angel of God. He received those plates; he translated the engravings which were there upon; and the translation which he has given to us is