

DISCOURSE
BY
ELDER THEODORE B. LEWIS,
DELIVERED
In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City,
Sunday Afternoon, August
28th, 1881.
REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

Introductory—The Gospel Circumscribes all Truth—Faith—Repentance—Baptism or the Remission of Sins—Laying on of Hands for the Reception of the Holy Ghost—Authority to Administer in the Ordinances of the Gospel—Joseph Smith—The Gospel of Christ no Experimental Religion: Its Principles are Eternal—Plurality of Wives—Honesty, Virtue, etc., Commanded by the Gospel—The Evils that Exist Among the Latter-day Saints—The Privilege of all to Become Intelligent—The Work Rolling on—General Garfield—Conclusion.

It has fallen to my lot, my brethren and sisters and friends, to occupy a portion of your time this afternoon, and while I stand before you I most sincerely crave an interest in your faith, in your prayers and in your attention. I am a great believer in that passage of Scripture which says: "There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding;" and I do most candidly think that when we assemble together as we have upon this present occasion, for the purpose of dwelling upon those thoughts that pertain to life and salvation, there is great necessity to think and reflect understandingly. The position a servant of God occupies before a congregation of assembled people is one of the most responsible ones that I can conceive of. The responsibilities devolving upon him upon an occasion of this character are of the greatest moment and importance. Therefore, while I stand before you, I must certainly invoke the inspiration of the spirit of the Lord, that it may operate upon me and impart unto me a proper understanding of the Gospel upon which my mind may be directed, I trust, under the guidance of that spirit. And I likewise invoke the inspiration of the spirit of the Lord upon you who hear, that we may all be made the happy recipients of the same influence, the same power, namely, the spirit of understanding, the inspiration of the Almighty.

The gospel of Jesus Christ, established by Him and wrought out by Him here upon the earth, covers such a vast area of ground, it circumscribes so many grand and noble principles that it would be utterly impossible for a speaker to run through the whole field upon one occasion, so it is necessary that the Spirit confine the speaker and the hearer to those reflections that will be of the greatest gain to them at the time. We have assembled here for the purpose of receiving aliment or food unto our spiritual needs. We presume that we are striving to serve the true and the living God; we presume that we as a congregation are striving to honor and magnify the existence which God has been pleased to grant unto us here on the earth, an earth that He has created for the dwelling place of His children. We wish to worship that God understandingly, and I do not know of any better way of worshipping Him than the way that He has marked out for us. I can conceive of no better plan of worshipping the Father of my spirit, the organizer of the world upon which I dwell—I can conceive of no better way than worshipping Him according to the plan that He has established, and that plan is made so plain that a person of the most limited powers of understanding can comprehend it. It pertains to our life here and our life hereafter. In its great operations and its power to circumscribe all the conditions of mankind, it does not take into consideration the power or principle of death, but each and every principle propagated is established upon eternal principles. Death is not recognized—that is, not recognized as an agent or power that has come to counteract any gospel principle or advantage. Therefore, it is a gospel of life, and its fundamental principles, as I remarked, are eternal. There are a great many doctrines, but it behoves us to become thoroughly acquainted with the fundamental principles of the gospel in order that we may be properly initiated, properly identified with the people of God, and be properly established in His Church, that we may be the recipients of those higher, purer, nobler principles that He

has in store for those whom He has chosen to worship Him.

The first grand foundation principle laid down is the principle of faith, a principle that you can all comprehend, a principle of power. This good book, the Bible, contains manifold evidences of its power, indeed not only of its power, but of its nature. This is the first principle that we take hold of in the great plan of salvation—faith in the God who created us, who organized us; faith in the redeeming power of His Son Jesus Christ, who came upon the earth and by His own life mission lived up to the principles that He taught, practiced the virtues, the truths and the principles that He propagated by His own mouth, practiced them in His daily course of life and established them beyond a doubt as being true and correct and all sufficient, and then, being crucified, going down into the grave, being resurrected therefrom, testified to the world of the power and authority of the Priesthood that He possessed to overcome every evil power on the earth. As I said, He came and practiced the principles He taught. He did not tell the people to do one thing and He Himself practice another; but the very principles of virtue—and they were the highest and noblest known to man or to Gods—that He propagated and lived here upon this earth, showed to man that it was possible to live the virtues, that exist in the heavens, here on the earth, and by that godlike course of life He calls upon us to believe in Him. What sacrifice do we have to make in believing in Him or in His power when it is made evident unto us by virtue of His resurrection and His passage on high, triumphant over everything pertaining to this earth, even the death, going down into the grave and bursting the chains and the bonds that bound Him to the grave, bursting them asunder and coming forth riding triumphant over every influence of an evil power, riding triumphant even over the bonds of death. This is the Being that I worship to-day; this is the grand character that I admire to-day; this is the Redeemer, the Savior of mankind. Well, now, in the Gospel dispensation we are required to have faith in Him.

The second essential principle that comes is a repentance of our sins. You will find the declaration in this book (the Bible). It is unnecessary for me to refer to passages or make quotations, but you find them so plainly made that, as I before remarked, a person of the most limited understanding can comprehend them. We are called upon to repent of our sins, which means, as I understand it, a forsaking of our sins. If we have been in the habit of following a certain routine in life and our associations and practices have been evil, or if evil thoughts or reflections have existed in our hearts, we must forsake them. A reformation is needed on our part, an eradication from our hearts and feelings of motives that caused us to do evil, that our reflections, our motives be of a purer nature, of a higher character. We must repent and form a resolution to forsake evil and endeavor to walk in the path marked out by our Savior.

After we have experienced this faith and made this proper repentance we are prepared then for another step. Now who is going to say what that other step shall be? The same power, the same authority that established the first principle of salvation established the second, and the same authority that established the second establishes the third. Christ when upon the earth preached and practiced this principle, that after we had repented of our sins we must be baptized for a remission of them. This is the third and great step that the Savior took himself "to fulfill all righteousness." He acknowledged this as one of the grand principles of life and salvation. He not only spoke to us and commanded us upon the subject, but set the example and proclaimed that unless a man be born of the water he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. We must be buried in the waters of baptism, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life." Baptism was symbolic of death and the resurrection.

In addition to this principle, after we have manifested faith, repented sincerely and appropriately of our sins and having been baptized for a remission of them, we then have hands laid upon us for the reception of the Holy Ghost. This was a practice exercised by the Apostles

and by those who held authority when Christ was here upon the earth. By the imposition of hands the Holy Ghost was imparted to candidates for this privilege and blessing. There is one thing, however, in connection with this principle, which must be borne in mind, namely, that nowhere in this holy book (the Bible) from the beginning to the end, when God had a people on the earth, and when the principles of His Gospel were being preached and taught and practiced—nowhere can we find that they did so without due authority from the Lord. It was necessary for them to be endowed with authority from on high; it was necessary for them to receive their commission from the power that was establishing those principles of life and salvation. If Christ in the courts of God in the grand assembly above, in the grand council that was held pertaining to the redemption, the exaltation and the glory of the world and of the children of men—if His proposition to redeem mankind, to save them and to exalt them, was accepted in these councils, He it is that has the power and authority to commission upon the earth those whom He wishes to officiate in the various ordinances pertaining to this Gospel dispensation. Therefore it is necessary before one can administer in these things to have authority, to be endowed with power from God. Thus if I have exercised faith, if I have duly repented of my sins and am now a candidate for baptism, as a third step, I must be baptized by one holding authority, one who has been commissioned from God. We do not want to be in that predicament that was stated—with all due respect to the memory of the great and good John Wesley—we do not want to be in the same predicament it was said of him after having ordained a Bishop:

How easily are bishops made, by man's capricious whim:
John Wesley hath on Coke laid hands, but who laid hands on him?

Where did Mr. Wesley receive his authority? As I remarked before, I have a high respect for the memory of that great and good man; I have a high appreciation of the great amount of good he accomplished through the principles he taught; but when we want to be initiated into the kingdom of God, that initiation must be done by one who has been commissioned from God.

Well, the Latter-day Saints claim that this authority did not exist on the earth; that an apostasy took place at an early date, and that the authority of the Priesthood was withdrawn from the children of men; that for a long period of time the earth was in a condition of darkness, and that there was no Priesthood, no revelation, no light, no intelligence received from the eternal worlds until a few years ago, when God condescended to restore the authority and power from on high. He sent down those from the eternal worlds who held this authority on the earth. He commanded them to go down to the earth and confer this authority upon men—even Peter, James and John—to confer the Melchisedec Priesthood, and John the Baptist to confer the Aaronic Priesthood. Now, this was strictly legitimate, and it is the only way we can comprehend the correct method of establishing principles of goodness upon the earth. At the same time we are prepared, as I remarked before, to exercise all due regard for every virtuous man upon the earth; we are prepared to admire all great and good men upon the earth, and love them for their goodness, admire them for what they have done for the children of men in paving the way for the establishment of the higher, purer and nobler principles of the Gospel; but when it comes to the authority that men should possess, there is none upon the earth outside of the Latter-day Saints that claim it.

The Latter-day Saints say this power was conferred upon Joseph Smith. "But," says one, "Joseph Smith was an illiterate boy." "Why," says another, "Joseph Smith was a dissipated man; Joseph Smith was without education; Joseph Smith was this, that and the other. The character of Joseph Smith does not come up to our conception as to what the character of a man should be who had been selected by the intelligences on high to perform so great and grand a mission upon the earth. His birth was too humble; his surroundings for educational development were too meagre; his associations for evil

were too great; he was too susceptible to evil influences for us to recognize him as the chosen one of the highest intelligences of the heavens to represent such principles on the earth. Therefore we are prepared to reject the professions made by Joseph Smith." Well, I can make a statement here that I made to a friend and relative of mine a few years ago, from the State of Missouri. This friend was much older than I am, and in speaking to him upon the principles of "Mormonism," he referred me to the history of the Latter-day Saints in the State of Missouri. "Why," said he, "I am a much older man than you are. You were quite young when the 'Mormons' made their history." "Well, sir," I enquired, "What do you know about their history?" "Well," said he, "I know that Joseph Smith was a very dissipated man, I know that he was a dishonest man," and applied quite a number of unpleasant, disagreeable epithets to him. I questioned him as to where he got his information, and he referred me to a man with whose character I was well acquainted—a man that no justices' court in all the country would take his testimony upon anything! I said to this friend of mine that I was not acquainted with Joseph Smith, that I never came under his personal influence. I grew up under the genial influences of Methodism. There was no "Mormon influence around me. Every influence of a moral, social or educational character was in direct opposition to the principles of "Mormonism." I matured to manhood and came out to this western Territory and it was here I first heard the principles that were propagated by the Prophet Joseph Smith. I investigated these principles to find out their truthfulness, and after having believed that they were true, and being commissioned by this authority, by this Priesthood that I have spoken of, I was sent forth to the States to preach the very principles that Joseph Smith taught. I had the satisfaction of having a personal knowledge in my heart that these principles were true and that they emanated from God. Now you may say what you please about the character of Joseph Smith. If Joseph Smith was humble and illiterate, so was the Apostle Peter and so were the other Apostles selected by the Savior, and I have yet to find anywhere in this book (the Bible) or in any of the teachings of God, that the Gospel or the leadership thereof, was to be confined to the learned. The God we worship is the Supreme Being of the universe. He possesses supreme intelligence. His intelligence circumscribes all space, all animate and inanimate matter. All knowledge is within His grasp. He controls all things, and it is within His power to take the humblest things on earth and make them the grandest, the greatest and the noblest. Now, mind you, I do not believe in illiteracy, I do not believe in ignorance. I do most supremely believe that the greatest curse that ever befell mankind is ignorance. I believe in intellectual power. I believe in the Holy Priesthood as a power emanating from God that will ameliorate the condition of the children of men, and not only ameliorate, but lift them up from the slums of society to that which constitutes the society of Heaven. That is my belief in regard to the destiny of the Latter-day Saints. If I thought the religion of the Latter-day Saints was going to drag men down, I am the last man on earth that would be in love with it; but I believe that the genius of my religion emanates from the supreme intelligence on high, and that it will lift me into the society of Him who created and organized the earth. That is why I accept the fundamental principles of life. I repented of my sins and follies; I was baptized for a remission of my sins by one holding the authority of the Holy Priesthood, and had hands laid upon me for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and went forth to the nations of the earth preaching and proclaiming these principles. Hence I stand before you to-day to bear my testimony to the divinity and the power of the Latter-day work. I know that it emanates from God, for I have proven it for myself. I have not seen any miraculous visions, I have not seen any miraculous manifestations of any kind, but my whole being, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, every nerve, every muscle, every drop of blood in my veins, tells me that God is in this work, and I am prepared before any court or tribunal on earth to bear testimony that the supreme God

liveth, that Jesus Christ liveth, that Joseph Smith liveth and is an active co-worker in this latter day work. Death does not issue with the Latter-day Saints. Joseph is not dead; the Prophets and Apostles of olden times are not dead; those who held the Priesthood in days that are past are not dead, but they live to-day a greater army of co-workers in the grand plan of redemption.

There are many principles grafted and established in this latter-day work for this redemption. Our families are organized not only for time, but for eternity, and those of our loved ones who died in days past and gone and who never had the privilege of hearing the Gospel, now have the privilege of hearing it, and we can attend to ordinances on their behalf, that we may be perfect with them in the grand hereafter, assembled, organized and formed into a grand family relationship with the authority of the holy Priesthood to rule and predominate over all, free from all the influences of contention, of strife, of discord, of ambition and other influences that pertain to life upon this earth.

The one grand thing that consoles me more than anything else in regard to my religion, and that is, it is an experimental religion so far as God is concerned. Every principle is just as eternal as He Himself is eternal. The principle of marriage and the marriage covenants are eternal. The principle of marriage that God has instituted upon the earth is not for the nineteenth century, but it is a grand eternal principle, and its foundation is as deep as eternity itself. It is not an experiment with the Latter-day Saints, and it would be well if the Congress of the United States were to take cognizance of this fact. It emanated from the heavens; God is the author thereof. God gave me my wives through the power and the authority of the Holy Priesthood; God gave me my children and everything that is to me dear and holy by the authority of the Holy Priesthood. And they are given to me upon eternal principles. It is no experiment. If it was simply a policy to correct—I do not care what, say the evil passions of men—I would feel bound to embrace any such policy; but when I recognize that it is a principle coming from God, an eternal principle, the foundation upon which the Gods were exalted, then I am prepared in my humility to stand up and defend, advocate and practice such a principle, leaving the result with God Almighty. I claim to be His servant; I claim to have accepted the principles of faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins; the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, the principle of celestial marriage, baptism for the dead and every grand and holy principle that God has instructed and established upon the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I have accepted these principles as not coming from man, but as coming from God. If I thought that man had anything to do with them, I would consider my opinion and my ideas just as good as another man's so far as my experience and observation went; but when I accept them as coming from God, when I realize that God is their author and that He has had them down from all eternity, I am not prepared to gainsay them.

Now, I just want to ask any one present—what does the religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints take from you that you ever possessed before that was true and correct? Before you received this Gospel you were probably taught to be honest, upright and virtuous, and the religion of Jesus Christ not only teaches, but commands these things. You are commanded to be virtuous and upright in heart; you are commanded to be truthful; you are commanded to be honest; you are commanded to honor your manhood before you can possibly honor the Priesthood that God has conferred upon you; and I will say right here, I have no regard or respect for a man who does not honor his manhood, to say nothing at all about his Priesthood.

Now, for the evil that exists in the midst of the Latter-day Saints, I have no argument. I know that evil does exist. I know that this is a Gospel dispensation to uproot and eradicate evil and to establish righteousness, and I know that if evil did not exist, there would be no longer any necessity for the work.

Judge Black, in his able reply to Mr. Lingersoll, says "that there have been crimes connected with the Christian Church, nobody will de-