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## DISCOURSE

Delivered at the Semi-Annual Conference, in the Tabernacle Salt Lake City, Tuesday morning, October 5th, 1897, by

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I cannot say that I feel in excellent condition to address the Conference this morning, but it is desired that I should say a few words, or read a few words, to you, as the Spirit may direct. Before entering, however, upon my remarks, I, perhaps, should make an apology, for it is really not agreeable with my feelings to diverge, in the least, from the channel of the remarks which we have received during this morning's service and throughout all the day yesterday; for the brethren have been led on spiritual matters, and they have spoken to us, by the Spirit, and have given unto us many very important truths, suggestions and admonitions, and I would delight to continue in the tenor of those remarks for the short time that I may occupy, but if I do not, it will be because I feel impressed that there is a duty resting upon me which I will endeavor, by the blessing of the Lord to perform.

I desire to remind the congregation that we are coming to the close of the fruitful season of the year, and while many of the people have perhaps not gathered as heavy crops as they would like to have gathered, and as they may have gathered in the years past, yet, taking our country, and valleys, as a whole, we are led to believe that the harvests have been bounteous, and that the Lord has blessed the earth this year, and has given to the husbandman excellent fruits for his labors; and it is desirable that we should reflect upon this matter for a little season. In connection with this thought, I will take the liberty to read to you a few of the written words of the Gospel on temporal matters, which I think apply to us in our present condition and at this time.

In answer to a question, "O Lord, show unto thy servants how much thou requirdest of the properties of the people for a tithing?" the Lord answered:

"Verily thus saith the Lord, I require all the surplus property to be put into the hands of the Bishop of my Church of Zion, for the building of mine house, and for the laying of the foundation of Zion and for the Priesthood, and for the debts of the Presidency of my Church. And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people. And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them for ever, for my Holy Priesthood, saith the Lord. Verily I say unto you, it shall come to pass, that all those who gather unto the land of Zion shall be tithed of their surplus properties, and shall observe this law, or they shall not be found worthy to abide

among you. And I say unto you, if my people observe not this law, to keep it holy, and by this law sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and my judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, verily I say unto you, it shall not be a land of Zion unto you. And this shall be an ensample unto all the Stakes of Zion. Even so. Amen. (Doc. and Cov., Sec. 119.)

Again it is said:

"Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice and a day for the tithing of my people, for he that is tithed shall not be burned at His coming, for after today cometh the burning. This is speaking after the manner of the Lord; for, verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble, and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of hosts, and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon." (Doc. and Cov., Sec. 64, v. 23, 24.)

I do not read the following words because I think they are entirely applicable to the Latter-day Saints, nor because I suppose for a moment that there is not a large proportion of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have never in their hearts even thought of robbing God. But there are those among us who, even though they may not have thought seriously that they were guilty of robbing God, they carelessly and through their negligence place themselves in a position in which the children of Israel found themselves anciently when the Prophet uttered these words against them, and I propose to read them as they are, and let them apply to whomsoever they will, and whoever are not guilty, of course, will feel clear in their consciences toward the Lord.

"Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the store house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the

devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts. Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee. Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." (Mal. iii, 4-18.)

Now I want to read another little passage of Scripture. It is ancient, however, but it has an application; and if I read it, you who hear it will be able to make the application, possibly, to suit yourselves, or to suit your neighbors. Rather let us make the application to ourselves, each of us, and let each of our neighbors do the same.

"And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought, in abundance, the first fruits of corn, wine and oil and honey and of all the increase of the field, and the tithe of all things brought they in abundance. And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the Lord their God, and laid them by heaps. In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and His people Israel. Then Hezekiah questioned with the Priests and the Levites concerning the heaps; and Azariah, the chief priest of the house of Zadock, answered him and said, 'Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty, for the Lord hath blessed His people, and that which is left is this great store.' Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the Lord, and they prepared them." (2 Chronicles xxxi: 5-11.)

No doubt, a good deal more could be read from the Scriptures in relation to this principle of tithing, which God has revealed to us in this dispensation, and which He requires at our hands, that we may sanctify, by obedience to His law, this land that it may become in-