

## DISCOURSE

BY

## PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR

DELIVERED AT

Ogden Tabernacle, on Sunday  
March 21st, 1880.

REPORTED BY GEORGE F. GIBBS.

It affords me pleasure to have the opportunity of being with the Saints of this place to-day. I came here to attend to your Primary meeting of the juveniles; and as I was here, I thought I would stay over Sunday and talk to the fathers and mothers a little. And I would state, as is generally understood by you all, that we do not have our discourses arranged for us, or marked out particularly. Our ideas are to present ourselves before the people, and to seek for the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, that such things may be communicated as may be advantageous and interesting to those who hear. And, therefore, when we meet together in an assembly like this we ought all of us, both speaker and hearer, to feel that we are in the hands of our Heavenly Father, and to seek for the aid of his Holy Spirit, that the speaker may speak correctly and understandingly, and in a manner that shall be calculated to promote the welfare of the people, and that the people themselves may also be prepared to receive such things as may be communicated.

We occupy a peculiar position on the earth at the present time, perhaps a little different from that of any other people that have existed on the earth—our thoughts, our ideas, our principles, our organization, our doctrines, our ordinances, and everything connected with our religious matters are different from those of other people; and it is our opinion, and not only our opinion, but a certainty—in fact, it amounts to knowledge among a great many of the Latter-day Saints, that the influences and principles that we have received have been communicated to us by the Almighty. We were not the originators of the principles we believe in; neither was Joseph nor Hyrum Smith, nor Prest. Brigham Young, nor the Twelve; neither was any individual nor any people associated with the priesthood or the organization of the Church at the present time. We believe that these things have been communicated to us by the Lord; that they are in strict harmony with principles that have existed heretofore, to a certain extent, with this difference however, that in the various dispensations that have existed upon the earth since its formation, each one has had its peculiar role to fulfil, with certain duties devolving upon those operating to attend to. We are living in the dispensation which is emphatically called the dispensation of the fulness of times, which we are informed from the scriptures has been “spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world was;” and this being the case, the dispensation in which we live embraces necessarily all that was contained in any and all of the other dispensations that have existed in all the ages preceding ours; and that consequently whatever organizations, manifestations, revelations, or communications that have ever come from God to the human family in their times and dispensations, we may consistently expect to be embodied in this one. And, therefore, in some respects, as I stated before, the dispensation or time in which we live differs in many particulars from those in which God has communicated to man.

We have, for instance, what is called the patriarchal dispensation, which existed before and after the flood. And those patriarchs and men of God that lived in those remote ages had communications with the Almighty, and they also had the gospel. And they not only received revelations pertaining to their own day and age, but also in regard to the future. And hence we are told that Adam, three years before his death, gathered together a great many of his people and the prominent authorities of the holy priesthood, and he blessed them, and being filled with the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest dispensation, including all the leading events that should transpire in the different ages of time, even until the winding up scene, associated with this our earth; embracing those things that have been and are to be brought forth in this the present dispensation. And, in fact, this dispensation, we are told, has been “spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world

was.” And, therefore, it must of necessity have been associated with the teachings of Adam, of Seth, of Enoch, of Methuselah, and of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and many other prominent characters that held communication with the Lord, and who had revealed unto them his purposes and designs in the days in which they lived. Many people listened to the principles of truth in their day. Enoch was a remarkable man and had a special mission to the people in his day, and he was full of the spirit of prophecy and revelation; he also had a Church organization as we have to a certain extent, and he preached to the people and forewarned them of certain events that should transpire upon the earth. And the wicked were angry with them, as they are sometimes with us; they did not like their teachings and operations, and they conspired against them, and great numbers of their enemies assembled for the purpose of destroying them. And Enoch was clothed upon by the power and spirit and revelation of God. And whilst under the inspiration of the Almighty he uttered his prophecies, and his enemies and the people generally trembled at the power of his words; and the earth shook, and the people fled from his presence afar off, and were not able to injure him, for God was with him. And Enoch, with the united labors of the elders of his day, gathered the people together who hearkened to his words and believed the message sent to them, in the same manner as you have been gathered together. They built up a city which was called Zion; and the people who inhabited it were under the inspiration of the Lord for a great number of years; receiving instruction, guidance and direction from him. And finally, as wickedness grew and increased, and as the testimony went forth among them, the good, the virtuous, the honorable, the pure and those who desired to fear God and work righteousness assembled themselves together, constituting the city of Zion; and the others became more corrupt. And Enoch and his brethren prophesied unto the people about the calamities that should overtake them, that the world was to be destroyed by a flood; and there were provisions made for the continuance of the human family, and it was made known to Methuselah that his seed should be the medium through which should be perpetuated the human family upon the earth. And Methuselah was so very desirous to have this thing fulfilled that Noah, his grandson, who was the son of Lamech, was ordained by Methuselah when he was ten years old.

The people, we learn, grew to be so corrupt that “the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts were only evil, and that continually;” and we are told that it even repented the Lord that he had made man. But the servants of God went forth preaching the gospel of life and salvation to this wicked people, and warned them of the destruction that was coming upon the earth. Before this great calamity took place Enoch and his city were translated.

The power of translation was a principle that existed in the Church in that dispensation. There is something very peculiar in these things. Some people, who are not in the Church, might ask me where I got my evidence from. To the Latter-day Saints I would say, we get it by revelation. We do not believe that, say some. That we cannot help. I am speaking now to those who do believe so, to those who are believers in God, and who are believers in the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and who believe in the revelations which the Lord has given and in those he continues to communicate. It is to those people I am speaking to-day on these points.

The Bible does not give us a very extensive history of these matters; in fact, it is very, very brief. Referring to that great man, Enoch, it tells us that he was not for God took him; and that is all. This is a very short history for so important a subject.

After that the flood came, which was a terrible calamity, to overtake the inhabitants of the earth; and they were swept away according to the prophecy—cut off from the earth, deprived of life and existence, and shut up in prison.

After some thousands of years Jesus came, associated with another dispensation. And when he appeared on the earth and had got through with his ministry, and had suffered in the flesh and was quickened by the spirit, “he went and preached to the spirits in prison” who

were, as stated, sometime disobedient in the days of Noah. And hence thousands of people that had suffered the wrath of God for so long a time had the opportunity of listening to the principles of the gospel in another dispensation that Jesus came to proclaim. And when he had got through with his mission on the earth to those who lived, he went then to preach to those who had been dead, and I might properly say were damned for so many years. And what was the especial mission he had to proclaim? He came “to preach the gospel to the poor, to open the eyes of the blind, to set at liberty those that were bound, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.” That was part of his mission; the whole of his mission, however, has not yet been fulfilled. But he came to liberate the prisoners, which he did in the spirit, when he got through with his mission on the earth.

On the back of that Noah steps forward in a prominent position, and he had his work to perform, which he did perform, and began to raise up another seed; and they lived also in what may be termed a patriarchal dispensation. And among them were many of his leading posterity. There was Melchisedec, for instance, who was called the King of Salem and the Prince of Peace, of whom Paul makes some curious remarks, among which was that Christ was a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec. If he was, then of course Melchisedec was a priest after the order of Christ. And as Christ introduced the gospel, so Melchisedec had the gospel, and had and held and administered in the same priesthood that Jesus did. And we read too, according to some men’s ideas, a very singular thing concerning him, that “he was without father and mother, and without beginning of days or end of years, and abideth a priest continually.” He must be, indeed, a very singular man, to be without father and without mother and without descent, and yet that he should be a priest forever. Well, how is it? You generally understand it; but I will inform those who do not that the Apostle Paul referred to the priesthood that Melchisedec held, and that they had what was termed the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood in their day, that is, the day in which Paul lived; and that a man to be a priest had to be a literal descendant of Aaron and of the tribe of Levi; and he had to be able to prove his lineage, tracing his descent back to the time when this priesthood was given by Moses in the wilderness. But the Melchisedec priesthood was different from that, it had nothing to do particularly with either father or mother, it being without descent, and, therefore, people holding it were not altogether dependent upon their father, or mother or descent for this authority; but that priesthood is an everlasting priesthood, administering in time and in eternity. And this is what Paul referred to by way of contradistinction to the Aaronic priesthood which then existed.

Associated with this priesthood there were certain powers and privileges. These Abraham possessed and enjoyed. Some people think that he was a kind of a shepherd with very few more ideas than a mushroom; that he lived in the dark ages and did not comprehend much; that he was not intelligent and had a species of what we term now-a-days old fogyism. But if we examine into his character and the position he occupied, and if we understand something about the principles he promulgated, we shall find that he was another character entirely. In giving his history he tells us that “He sought for the blessings of the Father and the right whereunto he should be ordained to administer the same.” He further says:—“Having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a great follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace; and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God I became a rightful heir, a high priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers; it was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time. Yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundations of the earth, to the present time, even the right of the first-born, on the first man, who was Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me.” Times and Seasons, vol. iii, p. 704. His father however was an idolator; but had probably possessed a record

of his genealogy, for Abraham in his record continues:—“I shall endeavor hereafter to delineate the chronology, running back from myself to the beginning of the creation, for the records have come into my hands, which I hold until the present time.” And having found out that he had a right to the priesthood, he, therefore, sought an ordination, and he was ordained by Melchisedec to the Melchisedec priesthood. And the Lord gave unto him certain privileges and powers that were very great; not only did he have an ordination in the way I refer to, but he sought more information from the Lord. And the Lord communicated with him and gave him a Urim and Thummim by which he was enabled to interpret, to read and comprehend the mind and will and the laws and purposes of God. And, furthermore, I would state that he went still further. He asked God for certain blessings and privileges and powers which belonged to him and which he considered were within his reach, and which were his privilege to obtain. And the Lord revealed himself to him and communicated unto him certain eternal principles—that no man can comprehend unless God does reveal them—and many other things—the motion of the planets, and the planetary system; of the earth on which we live, and the sun and the moon and the stars and the various bodies that compose our solar system; and then, of other suns, and other heavenly bodies and the laws governing them. Abraham wrote those things, and was well versed in those great principles; and some men affirm to-day that he was the founder of certain abstruse principles which they allege are discovered in what is called the Great Pyramid of Egypt,—principles that not only pertain to the planetary system but to events yet to transpire on the earth. I am not going to say anything about the truth or the untruth of those latter statements, as I have not investigated them sufficiently to comprehend them; but I merely give the opinion of a great many men respecting him and the intelligence he possessed. But suffice it to say, that the Lord himself instructed Abraham in things pertaining to this and other worlds, and that he in his day possessed more light and intelligence on the principles alluded to than all the combined wisdom of the world of to-day.

Now, this was the kind of a man that Abraham was. And his heart and feelings and affections were drawn out after God. And God blessed him and said unto him, “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee and thy seed shall be as the stars of heaven,” &c. And further the Lord told him, “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my word.” And hence he occupied a very important position. And, as I before said, being a patriarch he had the gospel and the priesthood belonging to it, namely, the Melchisedec priesthood.

I do not propose to-day to show how these things have all been literally fulfilled that are here spoken of; that I will leave for you to hunt up for yourselves. But the promises made to that man of God have been literally fulfilled, even to the present day to the coming forth of this work with which we are associated.

Now, that was a peculiar dispensation; it was under the dispensation that was introduced, say by Noah, or the one that he was, I was going to say, founder of; he was not the founder of it, but he was the one preserved by the Almighty from the wreck of the world, in which he had lived for upwards of 600 years to introduce it. And Abraham was one of the prominent actors in operating and carrying out the purposes of God in that dispensation, and there were a great many others too that were in possession of the same kind of intelligence; but he was one of the most prominent, therefore I have referred more particularly to him.

Then, there was another dispensation followed, called the Mosaic dispensation. Moses was made use of as an instrument to deliver the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. It had been predicted that the descendants of Israel should go into bondage and be confined there for 400 years, and that they should be delivered by the power of God. And Moses was the man chosen of the Lord to perform that work; and he was indebted to the Lord for the instruction and intelligence he received. We read in the Bible that on a certain occasion he saw a burning bush, and the

bush, we learn, was not consumed; and on going toward it he heard the voice of the Lord speaking unto him, telling him to take his shoes from off his feet, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. He did as he was commanded. The Lord then told him that he had a work for him to perform, which was that he should go down to Egypt where he had been reared from his youth and where he had been taught according to the learning of the Egyptians, to deliver his people Israel out of their bondage. You that are acquainted with your Bible know the history of it. The account is lengthy and I shall not attempt to enter into it. Suffice it to say, he succeeded in delivering the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. He had the power, when his people reached the Red Sea, to smite the sea and cause the waters to divide, thereby making a way of escape from their pursuers, the Egyptians. He led them into the wilderness where they had to depend entirely upon the mercies of God for their sustenance. But having been in bondage for so long a time it was difficult for them to comprehend many things that were communicated to them; and, we are told, they began to long for the leeks and the onions. We, in our day, would think that their taste was not so very delicate; but that was their desire, many of them feeling that they would rather go back to Egypt than to suffer the trials that seemed to await them. And the Lord manifested himself to them in many marvelous ways; and Moses who was their leader and who had been especially appointed by the Lord, went up to the mount, and the Lord gave unto him certain commandments which he wrote with his own finger, upon tables of stone which were prepared for that purpose. Moses was away from the people for some time conversing with and receiving communications from the Almighty, and when he came down he found that the people whom he had led out of Egypt and to whom the manifestations of the Lord had been shown, had made a golden calf and were worshipping it—about the same as we do sometimes, and we profess to be a much more enlightened people than they were—and they said, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” On seeing this wickedness on the part of his people he became angry, and he threw the tables of stone to the ground and broke them. Afterwards other stones were prepared and the same laws written on them. And the Lord was desirous that they as a people should be faithful in the observance of his laws, that they should be governed by the principles of the gospel which Moses taught them. That is a singular idea to some people; they think there was no gospel until Jesus came. Well, we cannot help that, but Paul understood it better. He tells us that Moses preached the gospel to them in the wilderness, but the word preached did not profit them, etc.; wherefore the law was added because of transgression. Added to what? To the gospel. Paul understood this if men in this day do not. And Moses did himself get into the presence of God, and he also led seventy elders who were so instructed and prepared that they could go into the presence of God to communicate with him; but the people were afraid of God, and when the Lord appeared to them on Mount Sinai, when they heard the thunders and saw the lightning and felt the mountain quake, they said to Moses, do not let the Lord speak to us any more lest we his people die; but do thou speak to us and be mouthpiece. They were not prepared to come into the presence of the Lord; they were not sufficiently pure, neither did they understand the laws and principles which God had communicated. But they murmured and murmured and that continually—the same as we do, we see something of the same spirit, we are found sometimes murmuring against God, or at least against some of the revelations he has given unto us, or against the Priesthood, and in many instances without cause. And what had God done for them? He brought them out from the midst of Egypt, from a state of servitude and vassalage, and delivered them from the hands of their oppressors, and when the Egyptians pursued them, he opened the waters of the Red Sea and let them pass through in safety; but swallowed up their enemies who pursued them. Then when they were short of food he supplied them with angels’ food, manna. That was all the harm he had done to