

Up to that time almost every religious person believed that when men left this condition of existence, if they had not made their peace with God, they were consigned irrevocably and forever to a place of eternal torment and burning, from which they never could be redeemed. This horrible doctrine was almost universally preached by those who believed in religion. We look back at it now and wonder how it was possible for enlightened individuals to entertain such a belief as this. There are many, no doubt, who still have that idea. But there has been a great change wrought out in this respect, and that change has been brought about by the revelations of God to the Prophet Joseph. Before the Church was organized God revealed to him that while the place of torment was eternal, and the punishment was eternal, it did not necessarily follow that human beings who received that punishment should suffer it eternally. What comfort this has brought to every one who has received it! What darkness it has dissipated! What fear it has dispelled! What a revolution it has effected! Through the revelation of this truth, the Latter-day Saints have been emancipated from the bondage of death. Death has lost its terrors, and God has appeared to the Latter-day Saints as the great and beneficent Being that He is—a God whom they could worship, a God of love, a God of mercy as well as justice. God's character has been vindicated by the revelation of this knowledge. He is a very different Being in the minds of those who understand this to what He was before this great truth was made known.

These ideas have spread among the people of the world. The Prophet Joseph was the man selected by the Lord to receive these great truths from heaven, and they have spread from him until they fill, in a measure, the earth. They have changed men's views, and people now have a broader comprehension of God and His attributes. Under the old condition of things many of the attributes that were ascribed to our God He did not possess. How could they reconcile the idea of His being a God of love when He would punish people, as the religious teachers taught that He did punish them—holding up the terrors of hell until the bare contemplation of people going to such a place was horrifying? In this way the character of God was maligned. He appeared as a horrible demon instead of the God that He is, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the Father of the human family. The revelation which God gave to Joseph, however, cleared away these false ideas. Now we know that men will be judged according to the deeds done in the body, and that that judgment will be a righteous judgment and not inflicted arbitrarily and cruelly. Men's minds have become expanded upon this point. Religious teachers have become broadened in their views. Insensibly perhaps to themselves, they have derived better conceptions of the Almighty from the teachings of the Elders of this Church. Although the world has not acknowledged and does not acknowledge the source whence they derive these ideas, yet it is a fact that the teachings of the Prophet Joseph, carried forward by the Elders in their travels among mankind, have had the effect of loosening these bonds of ignorance, dissipating these misconceptions of the truth, and liberalizing man-

kind. You can see this in every direction. To illustrate this I need only refer to a doctrine that was universally believed in, that after death there could be no change; that as the tree fell so it would lie; as man died so he would be throughout the endless ages of eternity, his lot being either one of exalted happiness in the presence of God, or never-ending misery with Satan and his angels. The Prophet Joseph Smith, through the revelations which God gave to him, advanced a different doctrine. He taught that men who died in ignorance of the Gospel could receive light and knowledge after death. The religious world recoiled from talking about the fate of the heathen. It was an insoluble problem for them to tell what would become of the heathen who died in ignorance of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They did not want to have that question asked them because of their inability to answer it. There is no name, says the Bible, under heaven whereby a man can be saved except the name of Jesus. The heathen have not heard the name of Jesus, and if there is no opportunity in the great hereafter for them to hear it, how then will they be saved? Are they sent to hell, there to suffer the pangs of eternal torment, never to be redeemed therefrom, because they never had the opportunity of hearing the name of the Son of God? This was a question that confronted people in those days, and every human being that had any sentiment of humanity in his heart revolted at the thought that God would be so unjust and so unmerciful as to consign millions of His creatures to this eternal torment for the sole reason that they never had the opportunity during life of hearing the name of the Son of God or His doctrines of salvation. This was all made clear by the revelation of God. The loving character of the Father was shown in its true light. The Prophet taught there was hope after death, and that the Gospel of the Son of God would be declared to those who had never heard it in life. The work of God is not confined to this mortal state. God is the God of eternity, and this little space that we call time does not comprehend all His means of salvation. His salvation is extended to every human being that is capable of receiving it. The Son of God Himself, while His body lay in the tomb awaiting its resurrection, went to the spirits in prison, and preached to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah. Noah proclaimed the Gospel in his day, and warned the people that a flood was impending which should destroy them. But they rejected the message of Noah and persisted in their wickedness, until they were overwhelmed with the flood. The Savior went, as stated by Peter, and preached the Gospel to these spirits. He opened the prison doors and led captivity captive, and He authorized His servants who had the authority to go and preach salvation to those who had so long been in darkness and torment, so that if they would believe in Him as their Savior and repent of their sins they might receive deliverance. The Prophet Joseph taught all this, he having received it through the revelations of Jesus Christ to him. He taught, as I have said, that mankind would be judged according to the deeds done in the body; that their punishment would be measured according to the extent of their wickedness, and not be without limit; that their re-

ward also would be in proportion to their merits; the murderer, if he repented, not to be brought on a level with those who had lived lives of purity and who had been mighty in the earth in accomplishing the work of God, as these false systems of theology were and are teaching. As a result of the teachings of the Prophet, the Latter-day Saints comprehend that there are degrees in the severity and extent of the punishment, as there are degrees in the measure of reward. Those who receive the Gospel and are faithful in keeping all the commandments of God will receive the exaltation that is comprehended in the presence of God and the Lamb. Those who do not attain to that perfection, who do not keep the commandments of God so perfectly, will be rewarded according to their merits. And there is hope even for the lowest human being if he will only repent of his sins, not only in this life but in the life to come. The Lord revealed this doctrine to the Prophet Joseph in plainness.

Ever since the publication and circulation of the Bible the inhabitants of the earth had read the passages contained therein concerning baptism for the dead, but no one seemed to understand them. Paul had also explained that there was one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, and as the stars differed in glory so should it be in the resurrection. Mankind had read these passages for generations, but they had not comprehended them. The Prophet of God received light from on high concerning them. He was able by the revelations which God gave to him to teach the grand truth that there would be an opportunity for men and women to receive the Gospel in the spirit world, and that there was in the plan of salvation a means provided by which they could be officiated for vicariously, through living persons acting in their behalf. As the Savior of the world had died for all mankind, and had made a vicarious atonement, so individuals in this life could act vicariously for those in the spirit world whom they desired to have redeemed from the thralldom of sin, and be baptized for them, and have the gift of the Holy Ghost confirmed upon them, together with other blessings that were necessary for their future happiness and exaltation, they in the spirit world receiving these blessings according to their faith and their willingness to keep the commandments of God. What a flood of light the revelation of these truths brought! How glorious our God appeared in the light of these truths! How true His character was to the descriptions that were given of Him by those who knew Him in ancient days! Those who received these truths could join with the ancient worthies in extolling and in praising the God of heaven, because His character appeared very different to that which had been given Him by the false systems of theology that existed in the world.

All these truths are having their effect. The preaching of them by the Elders of this Church is having its effect throughout the earth. People who belong to systems that are hoary with age are beginning to receive these truths and are teaching them to others. They are leavening the people, they are dissipating ignorance, they are enlarging men's minds, they are creating better conceptions of God and of His goodness, and mercy to the children of men.