

SALVATION FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

A Discourse Delivered by Elder Joseph F. Smith Jr., Before the Daughters of the Pioneers, January 15, 1908.

(Reported by F. W. Osterstrom.)

SALVATION for the dead is of vital importance to the Latter-day Saints. In order to understand this principle, we must first consider what salvation is, and how it is obtained, and therefore I shall speak somewhat along that line to show what salvation means to the Latter-day Saints. Our idea of salvation is far different from the belief entertained by the people of the world who profess a belief in Christ. There are many different roads to heaven as there are denominations, yet there is but one that can be correct and that is the road which was traveled by our Lord Himself and in which He commanded us to follow Him.

Salvation, as the Prophet Joseph tells us is to be placed beyond the power of our enemies. For instance, we are sometimes addicted to certain habits, perhaps that we keep the commandments, that we are not. When we receive the gospel and hear the Word of Wisdom, we repent of that evil, rise above it and become master of it. To that extent we are saved, and just so fast as we place evil under our feet are we saved. Salvation does not all come at once. We are not saved merely through a baptism, but through Jesus Christ, though many in the world believe this to be the case; that the only thing we need to do in order to receive salvation is to be baptized in the name of Christ. But salvation means much more to the Latter-day Saints. We believe that we are saved just so fast as we get knowledge and overcome our sins. We are saved as we keep the commandments of God, and not any quicker. There are two kinds of salvation: that which applies to all mankind, no matter where the children of Adam have lived, or when they have lived, or what their faith may have been; and the other salvation which includes an exaltation which comes only through obedience to the commands of God. I shall quote a good deal this afternoon from the Scriptures to prove what I have to say, and my talk will necessarily be an argumentative one.

WHY ADAM TRANSGRESSED.

Our common progenitor, Adam, has been wrongly condemned and criticized because of his transgression. Men have complained and said: Oh, what a glorious condition it would have been for us if Adam had not fallen! We would have been free from sin and affliction, and could have lived in the presence of the Lord, not subject to the ills of the flesh. When men say that, they show that they do not comprehend the plan of salvation which was established before the foundation of the world was laid. The Apostle John tells us in his Revelations, that Christ was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, that was chosen to be slain before the foundation of the world, it must have been in the plan of salvation for Adam to have transgressed when he came to this earth to take a mortal body. If Adam had not transgressed, we would not be here today. I want to read from the Book of Mormon something in relation to this, which is very plain. It is found in the second chapter of Second Nephi. Speaking of Adam and Eve, the prophet says:

"And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth."

"And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave unto the children of men. For He gave commandment that all men should repent; for He showed unto all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents."

"And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed, he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created, must have remained in the same state which they were created; and they would have remained forever, and had no end."

"And they would have had no children; wherefore, they would have remained in a state of probation, and they would have known no misery, doing no good, for they knew no sin."

"But behold all things have been done in the wisdom of Him who knoweth all things."

"Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy."

That explains the situation. It was necessary for Adam to fall in order that we might come from the spirit world and take mortal bodies of flesh and bones. It was necessary that we should be created in this probation, and become through obedience, sons and daughters of God. We have passed through one stage. We are now in the second stage, and we are yet to pass the third, and the glory he has given where we may dwell, if we are faithful. In the presence of our heavenly Father. This could not be had Adam not taken of the forbidden fruit, and himself become mortal. The prophet continues:

"And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that He may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall, they become free from every knowledge good and evil; to act for themselves, and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given."

"Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty, and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself."

MAN'S FREE AGENCY.

We understand that in the spirit world there were two plans presented—one by Satan, or Lucifer, the son of the morning, as he is called, who said: "Behold here am I, send me; I will be thy son, and thou shalt have me to thyself, and shall not be lost, and surely I will do it, wherefore give me thine honor." But the Savior, who was the Firstborn said: "Father, Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever." The Father accepted the plan of Christ which gives to all men their free agency through which they are enabled to act for themselves and receive power, and they will exult through faithfulness and personal effort in the kingdom of our heavenly Father. According to the plan of Satan we would have been free and autonomous to be acted upon, and they would have been no glory in such salvation. The Lord did not intend that His children should be lost, and when He gave them their agency He did it with the understanding that through the atonement of the Savior He would save all the workman of His hands, with the exception of the very few who would willfully reject salvation.

In a great portion of the Christian world the belief prevails that all who profess a belief in Christ will enter into His kingdom and that all will be saved, and that all who fall of that salvation—and it would be the great majority—would enter into a place called hell, where all

the salvation of their dead, and you can only do that by keeping the full law. There are some among us who feel like this: I have been baptized, and I have had the Holy Ghost, and I have the gift of the Holy Ghost, and therefore I will be saved. Why yes, you may be saved—somewhere in the kingdom of God, but let me tell you a one, if you stop there, you shall never enter into the Celestial kingdom. It will be impossible for you to enter into that glory. Because a man has been baptized is no sign that he is saved, as the Lord said of the people in His day who boasted that they were Abraham's children—"Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness." Many who profess to be Latter-day Saints and who do not like the law will be put out, and many of those who died without hearing the truth, and who would have received it had it been presented to them, will also be cast out into the kingdom of darkness. For salvation is to all the ends of the earth, the dead as well as the living. It isn't confined to the very few who have accepted the truth, sending all others into condemnation.

WHAT OF THE DEAD.

Motley, in his "Rise of the Dutch Republic," relates an incident worth repeating here. When Christianity was first taken among the heathen tribes of western Europe, Radbod, a chief, was apparently converted and applied for baptism. While standing in the water, just before the ceremony was to be performed, Radbod turned to the priest and said: "Where are my dead friends buried at present?" The priest very wisely replied: "In hell with all other unbelievers."

"Mighty well," replied the heathen, "I shall not be baptized, for I rather feel with my ancestors in the halls of Woden than with your little starveling band of Christians in heaven."

Was he right? Ask yourself the question, did you think that heaven was a very desirable place if you entered into it, and all your relatives, many of whom were as worthy as you but had been denied the privilege of the gospel, were shut out into outer darkness? Would it be heaven to you? No, it would not! In order that we may have joy, for which man has been created, it is necessary that we should have those with whom we love, and the Lord has prepared the way for this work of redemption, so that ALL might have the privilege of entering into His rest, and be partakers of His blessings there to be found. And this will come to all who are worthy, both living and dead.

I said awhile ago that in the world the idea prevails that all that is necessary to get salvation is to confess the name of the Lord, but in the 7th chapter of Matthew, beginning with the 23rd verse, the Lord declares that not all who enter into His kingdom, but only those who keep the commandments of His Father who is in heaven. He says: "I will send angels to stand before Him to be judged, many would say: 'Have we not prophesied in thy name?' and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works." And He will say unto them: "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." They could not do works in His name if they had not heard it, and they had not heard it, then we are told that the devils believed, and tremble, but they cannot be saved, because they have rejected salvation. In Hebrews, 5th chapter, 9th verse, Paul tells us that Christ is the author of salvation unto all those who obey Him. This salvation, of course, is the salvation which brings with it an exaltation.

I will read from the 18th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, beginning with the 11th verse:

"For, behold, the Lord, your Redeemer, suffered death in the flesh; wherefore He suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto Him."

"And He hath risen again from the dead, that He might bring all men unto Him on conditions of repentance."

"And whosoever is His joy in the soul that repenteth."

"Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people."

So this salvation, you see, comes only through faith in God, repentance from sin, baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and after that the keeping of all the laws that God may give. And it is not confined to the living.

Further, in the 19th section, beginning with the 16th verse:

"For, behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent."

"But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I."

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and mind, and that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink."

"Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men."

From this I understand that Christ suffered for all men, both quick and dead, as well as for the fall of Adam. We are all free from the penalty that would follow through transgression, the Lord has provided a way for us, and we will believe in Him and keep His commandments. But if we fail to keep His commandments, if we reject Him—then each one that does it must suffer as He suffered. When He died, He was of the whole world were resting upon Him. It was not the pain that He suffered from being nailed to the cross that caused Him to bleed, but the pain of His body, but it was the great responsibility and the weight of the sins that He was carrying—our sins, not His own, for He was free from sin. He was free from sin, but He suffered, and any man who will not repent must suffer for himself as Christ suffered for all. But if we will cast our sins upon Him and enter into His redemption, with repentance, and the desire to keep His commandments, then we are redeemed and will be brought back into the presence of God to be crowned with glory, honor and exaltation.

SALVATION FOR THE DEAD.

We will now take up the subject of salvation for the dead as it was taught and understood in ancient days.

First, in the days of Enoch: The Lord showed to that prophet the kingdoms of the earth and the peoples of the earth and the time of the flood, and the time of Noah and the flood, and that He intended to destroy the people for their wickedness. While showing these things the Lord wept, and Enoch marvelled that the Lord should weep. The Lord said of those who would not receive the truth: "Behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workman of my hands; wherefore, I will send them down, weeping, seeing these shall suffer." But behold, these which thine eyes are upon shall perish in the floods; and behold, I will shut them up; a prison have I prepared for them. That which I have chosen has pleased before my face. Wherefore, He saith for their sins; inasmuch as they will repent in the day when I shall return unto me, and until that day they shall be in torment."

I believe this means that all who rejected the teachings of Enoch and Noah—those men who were destroyed in the flood—were shut up to a prison house and there they suffered torment until Christ came and taught them the truth; for it says that they should be brought back into the day when the Chosen of the Lord should return unto Him, and He re-

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turned after His resurrection. This is the earliest measure that I know of dealing with salvation for the dead. It declares a prison house was prepared for those who had not been faithful, where they were shut up until Christ ministered unto them. In the Bible we have other passages: first, one in the Twenty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, beginning with the twentieth verse:

"The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again."

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth."

"And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited."

Again, in the Forty-second chapter He declares that Christ was the one who should free the prisoners from their prison house:

"I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thee by the right hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

This refers to Christ. Then we read in the fourth chapter of Luke that directly after He began His ministry in the flesh, Jesus went to the city of Nazareth, and entered into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and they handed to him the book of Isaiah (Isaiah). He stood before the congregation and read the following words:

"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 the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." (Isaiah 61: 1, 2.)

When He had read these words He closed the book and handed it to the minister, then declared to the people there assembled that He had come to fulfill Scripture, and He began to teach them, but they would not receive Him.

All these passages refer, in part at least, to the dead who are in the prison house and are waiting for the day when they should receive from the Savior when He should come to them and open the doors that they might go free. We are sometimes confronted by those who ridicule the doctrine of salvation for the dead, and they cite the statement we find in the sixteenth chapter of Luke, where the rich man and Lazarus are mentioned, and they say that there can be no salvation for the dead because Christ Himself has declared it, and they quote the twentieth verse:

"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they come up to us, that would come from thence."

According to the reading here these words were spoken by Abraham to the rich man when he asked that Lazarus might go to touch his lips, because he was in torment, but Abraham declared that he could not do it, as there was a gulf fixed between Abraham and the rich man that no man could cross. Therefore, those who oppose the doctrine say there is a separation of the righteous from the wicked, and if they cannot visit each other there is no salvation for the dead. But while we read the days of Christ, He came to open the doors of that prison house and to bridge that gulf, so that the prisoners who were shut up there, and who were dead, and who were in torment, they should be able to come up to us, that would come from thence."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."

"For the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."

"And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man."

And they marvelled what He could mean by saying the dead should hear His voice, so He continued:

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

Here we have His statement that the time should come when the dead should hear His voice and come forth to be judged, showing that He Himself would bridge that gulf so the prisoners could escape.

Further, in the first epistle of Peter, third chapter, we find the following:

"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 for them, in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved."

Now, why did He go and preach to the spirits in prison?

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them? Was it to harrow up their souls, to show them that He had died for the sins of the world—that is, for those who believed on Him—and that He had been raised from the dead? Did He go there to harrow up their feelings that their torment might be increased? Not by any means. Christ was merciful and He did not bring sorrow to the souls of these men who had lost their salvation through their disobedience, but He went to proclaim liberty to them, according to the teachings of Isaiah, Peter continues in the fourth chapter and sixth verse:

"For 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."

That is the reason He went to preach to them. And in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88, we have an account given of what shall take place when Christ comes again to the earth. We are told that those who are faithful shall be caught up to meet Him, and the righteous shall be raised from the dead and shall be caught up to meet Him. The account continues (eighty-ninth verse):

"And after this another angel shall sound, which is the second trumpet; and then cometh the redemption of those who are Christ's at His coming; who have received their part in that prison which is prepared for them, that they might receive the gospel, and be judged according to men in the flesh."

"And again, another trumpet shall sound, which is the third trumpet; and then cometh the spirits of men who are to be judged, and are found under condemnation."

So you see all who are in that prison house, whom the Son visited, and who are visited by His servants after His coming, are to come forth after paying the penalty. No man is going to escape the penalty of his sins altogether, unless he repents, and is mortal to accept the gospel. But his punishment will not last forever. It is explained in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 13, that the reason it is called endless torment, and eternal punishment, is because it is God's punishment, and He is eternal. It does not mean, as there explained, that these who partake of His punishment endure in it forever, but merely until justice is satisfied. Again, the Savior said that "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come," thereby showing that some sins were to be repented of and forgiven in the world to come.

In the fourteenth chapter of Romans, ninth verse, we are informed that the Lord is Lord of the dead as well as of the living. In Acts, tenth chapter, thirty-sixth verse, we learn that He is the Lord of ALL. Now I want to read a little from the Corinthians in regard to this subject. It appears that the Corinthian saints had begun to doubt the resurrection of Christ. You know the apostasy among those ancient saints commenced shortly after they were converted, so Paul wrote the Corinthians an epistle on the subject of the resurrection. It said:

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

"But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen?"

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

"Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:"

"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

"Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Fortunately, we have hope in Christ beyond this life—hope that He HAS provided for the redemption of our dead, and that we through performing the ordinances in their behalf in the temples of the Lord, can give up to them that which they were denied or which they neglected, as the case may be, when they were in the flesh. We are sometimes told that, if they are damned for them, and we can be confirmed for them that they might receive these blessings and be judged according to men in the flesh, but we are told that in the last chapter of the primitive saints, for Paul continues in the same chapter and says, proving his argument in relation to the salvation of the dead:

"Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"

"And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?"

While denying the atonement and resurrection of Christ, at the same time they were being baptized for the dead, and Paul appeals to them and asks the question: Why do you do these things, if you do not believe in them? If you do not believe in the resurrection, why then baptize for the dead? We before believe in it, what good will it do? There is no evidence that the gospel of salvation for the dead was thoroughly understood by any before the days of Christ. There is no evidence that baptism was performed before the days of Christ, in behalf of the dead, for reasons which I have already given; for the Lord said to Enoch, you will remember, that the spirits should be shut up in the prison house until Christ should come to them after He had been in the flesh to teach mankind the gospel—and again, He said that the prison house was opened by the Savior, who before that time there was a gulf there which had been fixed and which no man could pass; and all this goes to show that the ordinance in behalf of the dead were not performed before the days of Christ.

The Prophet Joseph Smith throws more light upon this, for in a discourse given by him some months before his death, you will find it published in the Times and Seasons, Vol. 3, pages 759, 761 he declared that the blood of all the righteous from the days of Abel down to the days of Zacharias, lay slain between the temple and the altar, would be required of that generation in which He lived. Commenting on it he said:

"Why would that blood be required of them? They were not responsible for the death of Abel and others of the prophets who lived before them. Then why should they be held responsible? Simply because they have greater privileges granted unto them than any others before them. They had the privilege, he tells us, of not alone saving themselves but also of performing the ordinances that would save their dead, and through the neglect of the work in behalf of their dead, they would have to answer for their blood. So it is with us, if we neglect the salvation of those who are dependent upon us, if we do not perform for them these ordinances which were denied them, then will their blood be required at our hands, and we will not be less before the judgment seat of God. Obadiah speaks of saviors coming upon Mount Zion to redeem the house of Jacob, as he calls it, in the Prophet Joseph Smith's house of Israel, and he further says: 'The only way that we can be saviors on Mount Zion is by performing this work for our dead.'"

SALVATION BY PROXY.

Some people say we cannot do this—the saving of the dead—for some body else, that that should have been done for them by themselves, and if

they failed to do it nothing that we do will avail, for every man must stand for himself, and stand against the requirements of the law, and we should do for ourselves, that "there is no such thing as proxy salvation," but they forget that Christ did that very thing for them, and that we are to pay the penalty which, if each of us got out just dues, we would have to pay ourselves. Who should answer for his sins but the man who commits the sins? But here was a case where we were all in a condition that we could not pay the penalty, and it required somebody to do it, and for that reason Christ came and did for us what we could not do for ourselves. So, also, we can do the same thing for others; that is, we have received the power and the authority through the restoration of the priesthood of Elijah—as prophesied of by

Malachi, wherein the hearts of the children are turned towards their fathers; and according to the promise made to the fathers—to perform this work of salvation by proxy in behalf of the dead; and thus we, in our weak way, become their saviors, and they become saviors to our fellow men by doing for them that which they now have not the power to do for themselves, as Jesus became a savior to us all. May the Lord bless you, Amen.

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