

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

PREST. JOHN TAYLOR,

At Ogden, Sunday afternoon,
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REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

I HAVE been very much interested in the remarks made by the several speakers who have addressed the Conference. And with the assistance of your prayers I will try to lay before you a few principles that may, perhaps, be of mutual benefit to us all. I might read a text, but I will only refer from memory to a passage of Scripture, and leave you to hunt it up yourselves. The disciples of Jesus came to him on one occasion, asking him to teach them how to pray, as John had taught his disciples. Said he, "when you pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," etc.

In hearing the remarks made by some of our brethren in regard to the subjects that have been treated upon, my mind was led to reflect upon certain principles contained in the Scriptures. And in pondering these things over in my own mind, the passage or prayer which I have alluded to occurred to me, prompted, I presume, by certain remarks that have been made, which were in substance as follows: That there were some persons, (how many I do not know, perhaps very few) who entertained the idea that, as Latter-day Saints, we had nothing at all to do with anything pertaining to political affairs. The Savior, as I have already mentioned, taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father," etc., to approach him as God, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and to hallow and revere his name—"hallowed be thy name." The next principle presented in the prayer is, "Thy kingdom come." Whenever I read anything, I like to understand it if possible, and the question arose naturally in my mind, What can be the Savior's meaning in those words? "Thy kingdom come." Why shall we pray that his kingdom may come? That his will may be done on the earth, as it is in heaven. And then towards the latter part of the prayer, will be found an answer to those skeptically inclined people, who think that God has nothing to do with the management of the affairs of the human family, he says, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

These words are pregnant with meaning; they are full of intelligence, and they convey to our minds, principles of great importance, associated with subjects that have been discoursed upon in your hearing. We have, many of us certain ideas more or less confused, and more or less distinct, according to circumstances. We talk very frequently, and we pray a good deal about what we call the Church and Kingdom of God, about which as I have said, we have ideas more or less distinct, as the case may be. And I think it is proper that we should entertain correct ideas in relation to these matters, and have an understanding of the position we occupy.

In regard to the church, our ideas perhaps are not very much confused or mixed. On this point, the ideas of the Latter-day Saints, are, that it was something introduced by revelation through Joseph Smith the prophet; that the Church as it was introduced was the same as that which existed among the ancient Nephites on this continent, as well as among the apostles and prophets that lived on the Asiatic continent, at the time when Jesus was upon the earth. And our idea is that the organization that we have, in which are set forth the various offices of the priesthood, is also given unto us by revelation. And, as Latter-day Saints, we are agreed in the belief that the world generally is in darkness respecting religious matters; that mankind generally have departed from the principles laid down by our Lord and Savior, in his day, and taught by his disciples. We believe that the priesthood, among other things, has become corrupted; and that men generally, so far as we have knowledge, are acting without authority to proclaim the Gospel or administer in the ordinances thereof. We believe that under these circumstances, it was necessary for God to again com-

municate with man and to reveal unto him the order of the holy priesthood, and to show him how to organize his church upon the earth. And hence the various revelations that have been given on this subject, and which are very clear and pointed pertaining to this matter. And hence apostles were chosen, of whom Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were the two first; and afterwards there was a quorum of twelve apostles chosen and elected. Others holding the Holy Priesthood, have been chosen to preside over the organized stake of Zion. Then there were high priests, and seventies, and elders, all having their separate organization and quorums. Patriarchs were also chosen, as well as bishops, with a presiding bishop and his two counselors, to preside over them; and there were also priests, teachers and deacons chosen, and all these officers, to fulfil the various duties which you have heard explained to you from time to time, and on which, therefore, it is not necessary for me now to speak in detail. Then, for the trying of small offences, there were introduced bishops' courts, the bishops themselves being called and denominated by the Lord as common judges in Israel, who, in connection with their counselors, are called to sit upon and adjudicate such cases as may come before them. Then, there were the high councils, whose members were chosen from the high priests' quorum, who were set apart according to the revelation given to regulate this matter, who were to hear cases that might be appealed from the bishop's court. Now all these are in the church authorities, as I understand it, and have to do with the management of church affairs, and as a whole, are, in fact, what may be called the church. And furthermore, we have thought, and still think, that these organizations, thus instituted, are patterns of like organizations, as they exist in heaven. And we understand that the priesthood is eternal, and that a person holding it here upon the earth, if faithful to it, will administer by virtue of the selfsame priesthood hereafter, and also under the same kind of organization; for it emanates from God, and hence it is of the greatest importance that we comprehend its true position, and our relationship thereto, and that we reflect with a view of reaching an understanding among ourselves, as to how far we are fulfilling the duties and obligations devolving upon us.

There are one or two things I would speak of in connection with this, namely, the duties of some portions of the Priesthood. I would refer more especially to the seventies, embracing also with them the high priests and elders. It is especially the duty of the Seventies to go forth, under the direction of the Twelve, to all nations, and to prepare themselves for this work. For when they were ordained and set apart to this priesthood, they took upon themselves this responsibility, to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature, as the Lord has made it known unto us through the prophet Joseph. What, with power, even to the forgiveness of sins? Yes, with power to baptize believers in Christ for the remission of their sins, and then lay their hands upon their heads, saying unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." And as God lives, and you are faithful, whenever you go forth and men comply with the conditions and requirements of the Gospel, God will back you up in your ministry, fulfilling to the entire satisfaction of the honest in heart the promises that you, as his servants, make unto them. And I would remark, that it is not consistent with the calling of a Seventy for a man to sit down all the time as though he has nothing to do. For God has given unto us a mission, and he will require at our hands the blood of the nations of the earth, unless we fulfil our missions and prepare ourselves to go forth as his servants, carrying to all peoples the message of glad tidings intrusted to us. And then it is expected of the Elders also that when they shall be called upon to perform missions that they will be prepared to go forth; for they are ordained to the Melchisedec priesthood, and so are the high priests, who also ought to hold themselves in readiness at all times to be under the direction of the Priesthood in carrying the Gospel of life and salvation to a fallen and corrupt generation.

Now, then, we come to another subject, and that is, the kingdom of

God. When people are in the Church of God, according to our ideas, and those of all good Latter-day Saints, they are subject to the counsel of the authorities that are over them. We all understand that principle; and we believe that God is at the head, and that the Priesthood ought to be prepared to receive the word of God from him, and that the various quorums, in the various positions which they occupy, ought, in their several capacities, to be under the direction of the Priesthood over them. And under such circumstances there could only be one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, who is in all and above all and through all, operating through the head to the various associations of the Church of God, and then each for himself operating before God in the dignity of his calling, and in the power of his priesthood, to receive from God that light and that knowledge which is necessary for him to have to enable him to magnify his calling and priesthood; so that among the thousands of Israel there might be many channels of communication open to God our Heavenly Father—our hope "having entered within the veil where Christ our forerunner has gone"—and all operating by the same spirit, will all be subject to the same law, and all under the government of the same spirit, for God is not the author of confusion, but order, which order should enter into all the churches of the Saints. It is not for every individual to take his own course, but it is for every one to sustain him, whoever he may be, who presides over him, by his faith and prayers, being directed by his presiding officer, and if need be, seek together for the mind and will of God, and then trace it from one to another until we get to the Lord. That is the way I understand these things. We do not expect, for instance, that every individual member will take his own way and follow his own course. That is not the order of the church and kingdom of God; it is not the order of the Church of God to begin with. In the first place it is right that we should listen to the voice of our teacher. What, should a seventy or a high priest listen to the voice of their teacher? Yes. Should an Apostle? Yes. Whenever the teachers come to my house, I am always glad to see them. I say to them, Brethren, come in, take seats. I then call my folks together to hear what they have to say to us; and while they wait upon us, acting in that capacity, it is their duty to teach, and ours to listen. But he cannot come to me in the character of an Apostle; he comes to me as a teacher, and I listen to him as a teacher, and should I in turn talk to him, he would listen to me as an Apostle. He listens to his bishop, and to those who preside over him, and so the principle may be continued. And does the president of the teachers need counsel? Yes. To whom does he go to get it? To his bishop. And does his bishop need counsel? Yes. And from whom does he obtain it? From the President of the Stake. And to whom does he seek for counsel? From the Twelve. And do the Twelve need counsel? Yes. From what source do they get it? They get it from the Lord, through his ministering agencies. And thus communication is opened up from one to the other, until it reaches the uttermost extent of Zion and all her stakes. And when we get into the celestial kingdom, if it should be our good fortune to be thus privileged, we will then and there find our proper position. There will be no disorder, nothing will be found out of place. And then, supposing the bishops listen to the Twelve, and the seventies listen to the Twelve, and the high priests listen to the Twelve, and the elders listen to the Twelve, and the priests, teachers and deacons listen to their proper authorities, and all listening to their constituted authorities, how far would it be from the will of God being done upon the earth? "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

However, I have been speaking more particularly of the Church of God, which is necessarily composed of people. Can you make a church without people? I would like to see you try. You may get up some spiritual concern, and that's all. We were told to go forth to all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and we went forth. And we were told to gather the people together to Zion, and to-day we find a people numbering 150,000, or upwards, from many nations, in-

habiting this Territory, all of whom are connected with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What next? Why, we have certain other duties to attend to. We have, for instance, a Legislature to organize, and men to vote for. We have probate judges and county judges and our municipal officers to make; in fact, we have an organism, which constitutes us a part of the body politic of the nation. Contrary to law? No. Contrary to the Constitution of the nation? No, but in strict accordance therewith. Now, what has God gathered us together for? Says he, "I will take you, one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." And what then? "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." And I read that a certain time will come, when the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And the elders have preached it over and over again, and you hardly knew what you were preaching about when you were declaring such things. But nevertheless, it is true; yes, as true as God lives, the law will yet go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And I read of another scripture which, in speaking of their rulers, says, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." Did you ever read of such a thing in the Bible? If you have not, go and search for it. They shall be taught of God. Jesus said, "Thy kingdom come." Why? That "Thy will may be done on the earth as it is done in heaven." Whose kingdom is this? God's. Who will stand at the head and dictate? The Lord. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." A question arises, will the devil have any rule there? I think not. Will the Lord need the assistance of the ungodly, the wicked and corrupt? I think not.

There was a class of men, called "soreheads," referred to by one of the speakers. When I heard them described, I thought they must be a little empty-headed. I wonder if such people think that the Lord wants the devil or any of his imps to help him build up the kingdom of God upon the earth; or whether we shall need any of their particular assistance? We talk about building up the kingdom of God, and about law and government and a great many things; but what do we understand about true government unless God is our teacher? how much do we comprehend of justice and righteousness, of the rights of man or of the rights of God? How much do we know about the kind of government we require in the coming struggle, when all nations will be convulsed, the government that will stand the test when trouble and famine and desolation shall stalk over the earth? Who is there to guide the ship? Apart from God, who is there to point out the course, guarding against the shoals, the quicksands and rocks which will threaten the destruction of the nations? The people of the earth do not show very much wisdom at the present time in regard to these matters. They have just escaped a most terrible calamity in the eastern world, wherein millions of people seemed as though they were going to fly at one another like so many hyenas and tear each other's throats. The struggle is deferred for a time, but it has yet to come, and amidst such a state of things how can we manage and direct our affairs so as to escape these dreadful results? We cannot unless God be with us, and unless he dictates. Talk about men holding the holy priesthood affiliating with the wicked and corrupt, and plotting with the ungodly to subvert the interests of Zion and to introduce anarchy, confusion, and division in our midst; such men are not the friends of God nor of his people while professing to obey him and to honor the priesthood, they are stealthily seeking to destroy and uproot the principles they profess to uphold, and in their own folly, vanity, presumption and wickedness they seek to ignore God and his Priesthood and the laws of life, by introducing the powers of darkness to subvert the designs of God; any man that tampers with this kind of folly, if he does not repent, will go to hell speedily. "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." The Priesthood must not rule, eh? God's messen-

gers, God's Priesthood, men who have covenanted with him, to obey his will and carry out his purposes and must lay aside their dignity and condescend to mix up with the foolish and vain and corrupt and the wicked, those that are enemies to God and who try to subvert the establishment of his Kingdom, whose only excuse can be their consummate ignorance? Have we left the nations of the earth; have we endured privations and met with difficulties; have we contended with opposition for the last forty or fifty years, now to yield obedience to the power of darkness? I tell you nay! In the name of Israel's God we never will, and let all Israel say amen. [The congregation said Amen.] We will be true to ourselves and be true to God; we will be true to our religion, and true to the principles of righteousness.

The work we are engaged in, the Gods are engaged in, and the holy Priesthood that has existed in generations past, is engaged in and they are looking and gazing upon us to-day, and they expect us to perform our part in the programme, in sending the gospel to every nation and tongue under heaven, and in the building of temples for the salvation of the living and the redemption of the dead, and in the building up of Zion and ushering in the kingdom of God upon the earth, that his will may be done upon the earth as it is in heaven. So certain men among us think that apostles had better not hold any public office, do they? Let me read a little out of the Bible, that Jesus spoke some time ago, to his disciples, "Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." And the Twelve among the Nephites, as well as the present Twelve will be judges both in time and eternity. Here it, ye Latter-day Saints, and get around it if you can. And yet they must not sit on some of your petty affairs and judge of matters of which you are so much wiser? You are so almighty big here, aint you? I do not think there are many that think so; and those who do think so, it is because of ignorance and want of serious reflection. We have a great work to perform. We are not here to sing

*Lullaby baby on the tree top,
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.*

We have something else to do; and the apostles have something else to do, and the seventies have something else to do, and the high priests have something else to do, and all men holding the priesthood ought to-day, to be feeling after God and making themselves acquainted with him, and draw down his blessings and his wisdom and his intelligence upon them, that they may comprehend correct principles, and be enabled to act in their several callings and parts in the day, the terrible day that is very near approaching. It will need something besides the wisdom of man to manage these affairs. The day is not far distant when these thrones, which are now beginning to tremble a little, will be cast down, when many of these empires will be dissolved, and when the power of God will be manifested among the nations of the earth, when devastation and war and bloodshed and pestilence and famine will prevail among the nations, and our own nation is not very far from it. God expects us to wake up, that we may be prepared for the calamity when it comes. We must be alive and energetic and full of wisdom and intelligence, and fully organized, that our lamps may be trimmed and oil be in our vessels, that the spirit of God may flow from us and spread in every direction; that Zion may begin to arise and shine.

In regard to our temporal things, many are acting as though they are trying to see how little they can do and get into the Kingdom of God. If they try much at that, they will miss it altogether if they do not mind. Whereas all ought to be enquiring, What can I do to build up the Kingdom of God? To begin with, be one in your temporal affairs and one in your spiritual things; and I tell you in the name of Israel's God you will never get around that. You may dig around it as much as you please, but you will never get around it, you will have to get through it, if ever you build up the Zion of God on the earth. It is not for you to take your ideas, or it is not for you, as they say in the church of England service, to follow the devices and desires of your own hearts; but it is for you to learn the will of God,