

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER JOHN TAYLOR,

DELIVERED

At the funeral services of Elder Thomas Williams, in the 14th Ward Assembly Rooms, Sunday Morning, July 19, 1874.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

We are met this morning to attend to one of those ceremonies that are intimately connected with human existence. People generally feel reflective on sorrowful occasions like the present, and there is something about the manner in which this, our beloved brother, was taken from us, that rather tends to increase this feeling of commiseration, not for the departed, but for his family, friends and associations. Taken away in the bloom of life and health, without a moment's warning, snatched off in the face of his family and ushered, as it were, immediately from this world into another state of existence, it produces feelings that are more easily imagined than described. However, my ideas in relation to this matter are that so long as we are prepared to live or to die, so long as we are living in the fear and favor of the Almighty, so long as we are fulfilling the various obligations, duties and responsibilities that devolve upon us, it is a matter of very little importance how or in what manner we leave this world and go into another. It is appointed for man once to die, and we can not evade the fiat which fate has decreed. No persons have yet been able to avoid the operations and summons of the grim monster whenever his call has been made. And when we reflect upon the position that we occupy upon the earth it is analogous, in this respect, to that of myriads of human beings who have existed before. In various parts of the world there have been a variety of opinions about the resurrection and about the state of man after death; but there has been very little difference of opinion about death itself. The myriads of human beings who have lived upon this earth have all gone in the same way, that is more or less. Some have died peaceably and quietly in their beds; others have been submerged in the ocean, and drowned far from friends and homes, some in the violent struggles of the battle field, and some have departed this life after enduring the agony and pain of lingering disease. There are phases associated with human existence and the departure of humanity from this world that are more pleasant than others, and we should like generally, if we could have our way, to make all preparations, have everything arranged, and to leave this world, bidding adieu to our friends and companions as quietly and easily as practicable. We should all like this if we could have our own way about it. But we do not have our choice. "God moves in a mysterious way," we are told, and the dispensations of Providence are inscrutable. Nor is it a matter of very much moment, according to my ideas, how, or in what way, we leave this world; the great object is and the great questions for us to solve are, are we prepared? Have we formed a union with God our Heavenly Father? Have we obtained the forgiveness of our sins? Are we living our religion? Are we keeping the commandments of God? Have we made arrangements for our everlasting associations with beings in the eternal worlds? If we have, if this is our position, it matters but little how or when we leave this world, that must be left for the Almighty to regulate and to decide upon.

God, in his eternal decrees, has ordained that all men must die, but as to the mode and manner of our exit, as I said before, it matters very little. As part of the household and family of God, as beings associated with eternity as well as time, it behooves us to reflect, and that calmly and deliberately, upon our present position, and our relationship and standing before God our heavenly Father. These are important questions for us to solve, and if we can solve them satisfactorily, then all is right.

These events that are continually transpiring around and among us convince us of the fallacy of all earthly enjoyments as associated merely with this life. No matter what our acquirements, no matter

what our talents or abilities, no matter what our wealth, position or circumstances in life, we all have to submit to the same grim monster, hence the question naturally comes to our minds, why are we thus situated? We seem attached, more or less, to this world. We are struggling, and striving, and grappling and grasping to possess the things of this world. Of what use are they now to this brother whose lifeless remains lie before us? And yet our whole lives, and thoughts, and energy, and talent are generally bent on their acquisition. In a short time, the body now lying here, with whose face we have been familiar, and whose company we have enjoyed, will be lying up there, enclosed in mother earth. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes, the worms preying upon his system, and his spirit gone into another state of existence. That which we see here to-day, will be our case in a short time. Myriads who have lived before us have gone the same way. Where are the statesmen, warriors, orators, princes, potentates, emperors, philosophers, and great men whose names are found upon the pages of history? They have gone! gone! gone! and we are all sliding down the plane of time and hurrying into eternity. This is the position of all men that ever have lived on the face of the earth. Is this our abiding place then? Is this the land of our immortal, eternal inheritance? Not until a change takes place. And what of the affairs of the earth—the baubles, tinsel, glitter and show, the empty name and appearance of earthly things? Why, just as a great and very sensible man expressed himself. Said he, "When I am gone you will build a monument over me, and you will write upon it—

"Here lies the great;—

but if I could rise from the tomb, and could again speak, I would say—

"False marble, where?

Nothing but poor and sordid dust lies there!"

So it will be with all of us, with me with you, we shall soon all be in that position. I do not care what our hopes, aspirations or position in life may be, we have all got to go through the dark valley of the shadow of death. We have all got to appear before the tribunal of a just God to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether those deeds have been good or evil.

And in the various changes that have taken place, in the cycles of time as they have rolled forward, and as they will continue to take place, what of the earth, what of the men who have lived and died and live again, and what of us? What are our position, ideas and prospects? We believe that God has spoken; we believe that light has emanated from the eternal worlds; we believe that God has given us revelation for our guide in time, and to prepare us for an eternal inheritance. For this the gospel has been preached; for this the elders of the church and Kingdom of God have gone abroad; for this we have gathered from distant lands; for this we build our temples and our tabernacles; for this we preach and pray daily that God may inspire our hearts with the spirit of revelation that emanates from him, and that the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, may rest upon and dwell within us, that when we get through with this time, we may be prepared, with our progenitors and our posterity, to inherit an eternal exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our God.

And what is anything without this? Do I mourn over that man? No, I do not, I feel sorry for his family, I do not mourn over him, not a particle. I would not shed a tear over him. He was a good man, a man who feared God, loved his religion, kept the commandments of God and walked humbly before him; he was a man who was honored and respected by the good, respected and honored of God and of holy angels, and it is all right with him. Do I mourn that he is taken away? No, we would like to have our good men stay among us, but perhaps they have something to do in another sphere. Perhaps the services of Brother Williams are required somewhere else. There are other positions for men to occupy besides this earth. We had our existence before we came here. We came here to do a certain work. He has done his and gone. Perhaps

God required him and has taken him away. All right, we will say, it is the Lord, let him do what seems him good.

In regard to ourselves, that is another thing that we have individually and personally to do with. It is all right with him, how is it with us? I talk to the living, to those who are in existence, who have their volition and their will, who have the power of action and their reasoning faculties, and I say unto them, look where you will be in a short time, and ask yourselves are you prepared, like him, to meet your God, and to have an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God? These are the questions that I would ask, and I would say that no matter what your position, what your wealth, what your prospects or ideas pertaining to this world, they are none of them worth anything except sanctified by God and appropriated for the building up of his kingdom and the establishment of righteousness upon the earth.

But the question is, are we the friends of God? Is God our friend? Are we living and walking in the light of his countenance? Do we feel that our spirits, feelings and consciences are right before him, that we have consciences void of offence towards God and towards man? These are some of the thoughts and reflections that we have to do with, and it is for us to think seriously, calmly and deliberately upon these things, and to act as wise, prudent, intelligent beings, that we may keep the commandments of God, live our religion and obtain an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God when we shall have got through with the affairs of time, with which we are surrounded.

May God help us to be faithful and keep his commandments, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER GEORGE Q. CANNON,

DELIVERED

At the funeral services of Elder Thomas Williams, in the 14th Ward Assembly Rooms, Sunday Morning, July 19, 1874.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

WHILE Elder Taylor was speaking of the future condition of the departed, the words of a writer in the Book of Mormon came to my mind, and I think that, probably, reading it will be as appropriate on the present occasion, to refresh the minds of the Saints in relation to their faith, and if there should be strangers present, it will give them an idea of the faith of the Latter-day Saints in relation to the resurrection. I think, I say, it would be as appropriate as anything I could say. They are the words of Jacob, the brother of Nephi, and are recorded in the second book of Nephi and sixth chapter. Speaking to a people who were there, Jacob says—

Behold, my beloved brethren, I speak unto you these things that ye may rejoice, and lift up your heads for ever, because of the blessings which the Lord God shall bestow upon your children. For I know that ye have searched much, many of you, to know of things to come; wherefore I know that ye know that our flesh must waste away and die; nevertheless, in our bodies we shall see God. Yea, I know that ye know, that in the body he shall show himself unto those at Jerusalem, from whence we came; for it is expedient that it should be among them; for it behoveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him. For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfill the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen, they were cut off from the presence of the Lord; wherefore it must needs be an infinite atonement; save it should be an infinite atonement, this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man, must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

O the wisdom of God! his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more, our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents; who

transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder, and all manner of secret works of darkness.

O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. And because of the way of the deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave. And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead: which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel.

O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh; save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect; wherefore, we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness.

And it shall come to pass, that when all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, inasmuch as they have become immortal, they must appear before the judgment seat of the Holy One of Israel; and then cometh the judgment, and then must they be judged according to the holy judgment of God. And assuredly, as the Lord liveth, for the Lord God hath spoken it, and it is his eternal word, which cannot pass away, that they who are righteous, shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy, shall be filthy still; wherefore, they who are filthy, are the devil and his angels; and they shall go away into everlasting fire, prepared for them; and their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up for ever and ever, and has no end.

O the greatness and the justness of our God! For he executeth all his words, and they have gone forth out of his mouth, and his law must be fulfilled. But, behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it; they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever.

O the greatness of the mercy of our God; the Holy One of Israel! For he delivereth his saints from that awful monster the devil, and death, and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.

O how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things, and there is not anything, save he knows it. And he cometh into the world that he may save all men, if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men; yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam. And he suffereth this, that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day. And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel; or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God. And if they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned, for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it; wherefore he has given a law; and where there is no law given, there is no punishment; and where there is no punishment, there is no condemnation; and where there is no condemnation, the mercies of the Holy One of Israel have claim upon them, because of the atonement; for they are delivered by the power of him; for the atonement satisfieth the demands of his justice upon all those who have not the law given to them, that they are delivered from that awful monster death and hell, and the devil, and the lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment; and they are restored to that God who gave them breath, which is the Holy One of Israel.

There is much more in this chapter of a similar character, very instructive to those who read and have faith to believe the testimony of this man.

In speaking to you, my brethren and sisters, who are familiar with the life of him whose remains are in our midst this morning, I need not say to you scarcely what our views and hopes are concerning him. We know when a man dies, inasmuch as he dies faithful to the truth, having kept the commandments of God and obeyed the ordinances of the house of God as far as they have been revealed and as he has had an opportunity, that he is secure, that his future is assured. He goes, as we are taught, to the Paradise of God, there to await the morning of the first resurrection. We know that his body will be called forth from the dust and from the tomb, and that his spirit will reanimate it, and he enter upon that glorious condition of existence

concerning which so many promises have been made. In this respect the faith of the Latter-day Saints is not a chimera, it is something tangible.

While I sat here and listened to the words of our brother the reflection came across my mind—how often we are called upon to participate in sad scenes like the present, and yet throughout all this Territory, among all the Latter-day Saints, there is this peculiarity, which was not witnessed in the case of our brother because of the suddenness of his taking off; but have never yet found, in any instance where people have been summoned hence by death, that there were death and sorrow, and feelings of pain and anguish, and dread concerning the future as I have witnessed elsewhere. In the early days of this church God promised unto the Latter-day Saints that their deaths should be peaceful, and that the dread of death should be taken away from them, and after forty-four years' experience we, to-day, and in all the years that are passed, have realized the truth of this promise.

There is something tangible about the faith which God has revealed. If I go forth believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and am baptized for the remission of my sins, and receive the Holy Ghost, I know that I have done that which God requires at my hands, and if I should die at such a time what have I to fear? If the Holy Ghost has descended upon me it is a witness and evidence to me that I have received a remission of my sins, and that the promise of God has been fulfilled to me, and that the man who administered that holy ordinance to me was an authorized servant of Jesus Christ.

That was the case with Brother Williams. His testimonies were of the most remarkable character. I have heard him speak about the evidences of his truthfulness he had when he joined this church, and I have been almost overpowered with joy that I lived in a day and age of the world when God revealed his mind and will unto man as he did in ancient days. A more powerful testimony, probably, could not be heard than has been borne so repeatedly by our deceased brother. And then what? Why the Spirit of God rested upon him and impelled him to leave his friends and his former home and associations and gather with the Saints. Did he do this because some "Mormon" elder told him it was right to do it? No, he did this because the Spirit and power of God rested upon him and impelled him to do it. He was filled with joy and peace in obeying this commandment of God, and it was so after he came here in all the works that devolved upon him. Only the day before he died we had a long conversation about these things together, and I trust I shall never forget the spirit that rested upon him and myself while talking. Speaking about the unfaithfulness of men, he did not say in these exact words, but he conveyed the idea to me that he would rather die, rather lay down his life than prove recreant to the principles of the gospel which he had espoused, he valued them so highly, more than life and everything else on the face of the earth. He has done all that he could do. That power which God promised, or which Jesus rather gave unto Peter, when he said that he should have the power to bind on earth and it should be bound in heaven, and the power to loose on earth and it should be loosed in heaven, has been exercised in behalf of our deceased brother. He took a wife and she was sealed to him by the power of the holy priesthood, and he entered into this holy ordinance and obeyed celestial marriage as it was revealed to him in the fulness of his faith, although it was a trial to him. But he was impelled to do so by the power which rested down upon him, and he knew he did that which was right. He went forward in obedience to the commandments, putting his trust in God, and I know, as he knew and still knows, though gone behind the veil, that he has secured to himself, so far as his own works could secure, through the grace and atonement of Jesus Christ, his eternal exaltation in the presence of God our heavenly Father.

It is not a strong assurance of hope that the Latter-day Saints have, that they will receive these blessings in the eternal worlds; but when the promise is sealed upon their heads that they shall come