

RELIGIOUS.

Sunday Services.

Religious services were held at the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, November 20th, 1892, commencing at 2 o'clock p. m., President Angus M. Cannon presiding.

The choir sang the hymn:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.

Prayer by Elder James P. Freeze.

The choir sang the anthem:
God of Israel.

The Priesthood of the Seventeenth ward officiated in the administration of the Sacrament.

ELDER JOHN NICHOLSON

was then requested to address the audience. He felt, he said, his own inefficiency, but asked for the attention, sympathy and faith of his hearers, in order that he might be enabled to say that which is appropriate to the occasion.

One of the reasons why we assemble as this afternoon is to show that we remember the Savior, by partaking of the Sacrament. To do so with clean hands and pure hearts we must be pure in feelings and sentiments. There should be no feeling of unkindness to anybody, and least of all to those of the same faith. Before coming here we should therefore rid ourselves of all that is detrimental to our full union with one another. If we prepare ourselves thus we shall feel blessed.

The speaker now read from the sixth verse, ninth chapter, 2nd Nephi, Book of Mormon, in regard to what the Son of God has done for the redemption of mankind. Christ, he continued, by His atonement, brought to pass the resurrection of man, so that as all have sinned, so all through His work shall rise to life again and have the benefit of the experience they have gained on earth. It is difficult to explain the reasons of the great work before us from any other standpoint.

There is a tendency among the people of the world to deny revelation and some are growing up in our own midst with the same ideas. They ask for philosophical reasons for the doctrines preached and will not accept revelation alone. Now, this desire for reasons will no doubt sooner or later be gratified, for truth can be explained. It has been admitted that our Elders have not had much difficulty in establishing their doctrines according to revelation, for they are founded on truth and are in accord with sound philosophy; as President Brigham Young used to say, the Gospel is philosophy. It is true, even if it had never been revealed to man. There have been barriers to giving a reasonable ground for the doctrine of atonement, but these were depending on misunderstandings concerning the origin and existence of man. For ages it has been taught that the beginning of man is his first appearance on this planet. There is a general admission of the duality of man—his existence as a spirit in the mortal tabernacle. On this point there is not much controversy. But regarding the existence of the spirit before the body the ideas are not so clear. Yet, the scriptures are not uncertain on the

subject. Jeremias, for instance, is said to have been selected to be a prophet of the Lord previous to his coming into the world. Christ existed before He came to the earth, for He says he was before Abraham. Such statements are numerous, although they are not generally accepted even by religionists. The question now is, is it reasonable to suppose that man had a pre-existence? which question, the speaker answered in the affirmative. It is the most reasonable theory to hold. Everything points to this—the intelligence of man which has enabled him to perform the great wonders which surround us, wonders that do not only belong to the nineteenth century but every age and every race of man. Witness the remarkable collections contained in the great museums of the world. In this age we have the accumulation of thought and intelligence of all the preceding ages; this is what gives us the advantage over them.

Now, are these wonderful achievements the result of the experience gained by man only during the short span of life allotted to him on earth? The speaker thought not, for that would be contrary to the law of development, which regulates everything in nature. The most reasonable conclusion is that all this is the consequence of our anterior experience and not a leap all at once into this remarkable excellence of intelligence. It also accords with the announcement made by Joseph Smith, the great prophet of this century, who told us by revelation from God that all things were first created spiritually. It was necessary that spirit and element should come together that there might be a fullness of joy. It appears also to have been necessary that man should transgress in order that the law of his previous existence should be violated and man find himself in the position in which he now is. But this again made it necessary that there should be an atonement whereby divine justice should be satisfied. And, as Nephi says, it must be a divine atonement, for no other would cover the ground. Man had exhausted his resources; he could not redeem himself; therefore it must be the atonement of one on whom death and hell had no claim. On us death had claim, but not on Him. Being an infinite atonement, it covers the whole of the human race and makes it possible for all to derive eternal benefits therefrom. Now it is clear that if there is no pre-existence of the human race, the atonement can not be explained. The two doctrines are in perfect harmony with each other and with the whole system of true theology.

If we comprehend this we believe in it and find it easy, comparatively, to follow Christ who has brought this great atonement. He laid Christ laid His life down for us, a fact that makes it appropriate that we should give our devotion to Him, by keeping His commandments. This is true repentance. When we become convinced that we are not living in conformity to the law of God we reform; we cease to do that which is wrong and do what is told us by the Lord is right. This is the nature of repentance and is illustrated in the parable of the prodigal, who returned to his father, although he

felt he was not worthy to be called son any more. But the father was forgiving and there was joy in the home when the prodigal returned. So we have the promise, when we repent, our sins will be forgiven. Here then is the atonement, faith and repentance.

Now, when a human being resolves to follow Christ, and the Lord accepts him, there is an act instituted appropriate to the covenant into which the Lord and the repentant person have entered. This act is baptism for the remission of sins. How beautiful this ordinance is if rightly understood. Some seem to think that this ordinance is too simple to be of divine origin, but its very simplicity is in full harmony with the whole plan of salvation. It is so planned that no one is excluded from it. It is as acceptable to the highest capacity as it is within the reach of the simplest mind. In this act Christ is present through His agents, for it must be administered by an authorized servant of the Lord to be blading. This is clearly taught by the Word of God, in the history of John the Baptist, for instance, by whom Jesus was baptized, after which He received the Holy Ghost and the testimony that He was the Son of God. If it was not beneath Him, who had left the throne of glory, to submit to this ordinance, it should certainly not be beneath our dignity to observe it.

Speaking of the resurrection of Christ, Elder Nicholson observed that the body of the Savior was freed from mortality. When a candidate for salvation goes down into the water, he comes out free from sin, as Christ came forth from the grave free from all that was corruptible—the symbol of beauty. Those who obeyed the Gospel in foreign lands—will never forget the moment when they went down into the waters of baptism and took upon themselves the name of Latter-day Saint. Even the man himself who administered the ordinance is remembered with gratitude by the Saints.

When the individual is free from his sins he is in a position to receive the Holy Spirit, for it is the promise of the Lord that He shall be given to those who have been baptized for the remission of sins. The Spirit is given through the ordinance of laying on of hands by the Elders authorized to do so.

There is abundant testimony among the Saints to the truth of the Gospel. Thousands can testify to the reception of the Holy Ghost in accordance with the promise, no matter whether people choose to believe it or not. The Saints know that they have received the Spirit and no contradiction can alter the fact any more than persecution could alter the fact that Paul saw a light and heard the voice of the Savior on the road to Damascus. When a person has received the Spirit of God he no longer belongs to the world but to the Kingdom of the Lord. And if he continue faithful to the end, he shall finally receive an entrance into the celestial kingdom.

The choir and congregation joined in singing:

The Spirit of God like a fire is burning.

Benediction by Bishop William B. Preston.