

DISCOURSE

BY

APOSTLE WILFORD WOODRUFF

DELIVERED

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REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

I feel disposed to read a chapter in the Bible; the chapter that I shall read contains, perhaps, a stronger chain of truth concerning life and death, the fall and redemption of man, the redemption and resurrection of the dead, than any other I know of in the Bible.

The speaker then read the 15th Chapter, of 1st Corinthians, and said: Before proceeding to make any remarks upon this chapter, I wish to say that there is no person who knows, before entering this building who is going to address the assembly, and, therefore, we have no prepared sermons to deliver, it may be a miller or it may be a mason, it may be a carpenter, or it may be a farmer, a lawyer, a merchant or otherwise; this practice is peculiar to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the tendency is to make the speaker, whoever he may be, depend upon the spirit of inspiration to guide his thoughts and dictate his remarks. And, as a general thing, if God, through this means, gives us nothing to say, we can say nothing to instruct the people.

I have often expressed my views with regard to the position we occupy before heaven and earth, before God, angels and men, and the views of Jesus and His Apostles and Elders as they have come down to us give a key to what I wish to say upon this subject. If there is an Emperor, a King, a President, a ruler of any nation or people, whether a monarchy, kingdom or republic, that takes away from any of his subjects or fellow-citizens the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, he deprives them of a right which the God of heaven has guaranteed unto them. These are the sentiments of the Latter-day Saints. We believe in giving to all men freedom, freedom in spirit and action; we believe in religionists of every creed and faith enjoying the liberty to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, which right is guaranteed unto them by God Himself; and the man or set of men that would deprive their fellows of this God-given right assumes a responsibility that they must answer before the bar of God. If I had the power and control of the whole world I would never think of depriving any man, woman or child of this natural; this inherent right, whether their religious views were true or false. Can you find from history that God at any time forced any man to heaven or hell? No, you can not. And we as Latter-day Saints claim this right and privilege for ourselves to worship God, to believe in God, and to believe in the records of divine truth—the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the revelations of God.

A public speaker, a teacher of the people is held responsible before God and his fellowmen for the doctrine he teaches; if he teaches any other gospel than that laid down in the Bible and taught by the ancient Prophets and Apostles he is under condemnation, no matter who he may be. Paul realized this fact so keenly that he, in speaking about it on one occasion, said: "Though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed;" and he repeats this sentiment two or three times over.

I wish to say a few words on the verses I have read, on the 22nd: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The world, more or less, has found a great deal of fault with Mother Eve and with Father Adam because of the fall of man; what I have to say with regard to it, I express as my own opinion. Adam and Eve came to this world to perform exactly the part that they acted in the garden of Eden; and I will say, they were ordained of God to do what they did, and it was therefore expected that they would eat of the forbidden fruit in order that man might know both good and evil by passing through this school of experience which this life affords us. That is all I want to say about Father Adam and Mother Eve.

Adam fell that man might be, and men are that they might have joy; and some have might fault with that. It has been said that God commanded Adam to multiply and replenish the earth; and it has been said that Adam was not under the necessity of falling in order to multiply and replenish the earth, but you will understand that the woman was deceived and not the man; and according to the justice of God she would have been cast out into the lowly and dreary world alone and thus the first great command could not have been complied with unless Adam had partaken of the forbidden fruit. We acknowledge that through Adam all have died, that death through the fall must pass upon the whole human family, also upon the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air and all the works of God as far as this earth is concerned. It is a law that is unchangeable and irrevocable. It is true a few have been translated, and there will be living upon the earth thousands and millions of people when the Messiah comes in power and great glory to reward every man according to the deeds done in the body, who will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, from mortality to immortality. Nevertheless they must pass through the ordeal of death involved in the change that will come upon them. The Savior himself tasted of death; He died to redeem the world; His body was laid in the tomb, but it did not see corruption; and after three days it arose from the grave and put on immortality. He was the first fruit of the resurrection. There was no prophet, no saint or sinner, from the days of Father Adam to the days of Jesus that ever rose from the dead through the keys and power of the resurrection. Although we read of some who were restored to life, but this was not what is termed the resurrection.

With regard to redemption, Paul said: All the children of Adam are redeemed from the fall by the atoning blood of Jesus; and all infants are redeemed as well as other people. There is no infant or child that has died before arriving at the years of accountability, but what is redeemed, and is therefore entirely beyond the torments of hell, to use a sectarian term. And any doctrine, such as the sprinkling of infants or any religious rite for little children is of no effect whatever neither in this world nor in the world to come. It is a man-made doctrine, and therefore not ordained of God; and I will defy any man to find in any of the records of divine truth any ordinance instituted for the salvation of little innocent children; it would be unnecessary on the face of it, and the only thing that can be found is where Jesus took the little ones in his arms and blessed them, which is and would be perfectly right to do according to the order of God. But the sprinkling of infants or the doctrine that infants go to hell under any circumstances is a doctrine ordained of man and not of God, and is therefore of no avail and entirely wrong and displeasing in the sight of God. So much about the infants. I will say again they are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and when they die, whether of Christian, Pagan or Jewish parentage, their spirits are taken home to God who gave them, and never go to suffer torments of any kind.

Another subject I wish to say a few words upon: "In Christ all are made alive." Since the day that sin entered into the world men have been held accountable for their own acts, and it has been known upon this earth from the day, at least, that Cain slew his brother Abel. And sin has presented itself in different grades; there are murder, blasphemy, lying, stealing, whoredom, and abominations of many different forms, which have followed man from generation to generation. For there was a power that dwelt upon the earth in the form of thousands and millions of fallen spirits, one-third of the hosts of heaven, which had been cast out of heaven with the devil in the great rebellion, who remain in that condition and who do not possess tabernacles, and they make war upon the Saints of God wherever or whenever they are found upon the earth, and upon all men; they seek to destroy the whole human family, and have done so from the beginning until the present day, and they have not ceased their labors nor do they intend to while Satan remains unbound. All the children of men who arrive at the years of accountability are guilty of sin, all being inclined to do evil as

the sparks are to fly upwards. "What shall we do to be saved?" was the cry of the people who heard the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, and the same may be said to be applicable to all men in every generation. The answer would be, obey the law of the Gospel. This is the safe means given for the salvation of the human family. The law of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which the Gospel contains the laws of God; it contains the ordinances, it contains the commandments, and any man that breaks them is guilty before God. And I will here say, as I wish to be understood by all men, that our faith is, there never has been but one Gospel upon the earth though to-day there are six hundred three score and six different religious faiths, all more or less diverse one from another; but there is but the one true and everlasting Gospel, and never will be any more, and it is the same Gospel that was taught to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Patriarchs, and which Jesus and the Apostles preached; it never did vary in the least in one single instance, nor never will. And I say, if we teach any other Gospel than that which was taught by Jesus and His Apostles, we teach a false Gospel, and shall be under condemnation before God, angels and men.

What is the Gospel as taught by Jesus himself? The very first principle was faith in the Messiah; this was the first principle ever taught to man. When Adam, after being driven from the garden of Eden, went to Adam-ondi-Ahman to offer sacrifice, the angel of the Lord asked him why he did so. Adam replied that he did not know, but the Lord had commanded him to do it. He was then told that the blood of bulls and goats, of rams and lambs should be spilt upon the altar as a type of the great and last sacrifice which should be offered up for the sins of the world. The first principle, then, ever taught to Father Adam was faith in the Messiah, who was to come in the meridian of time to lay down His life for the redemption of man. The second principle was repentance. And what is repentance? The forsaking of sin. The man who repents, if he be a swearer, swears no more; or a thief, steals no more; he turns away from all former sins and commits them no more. It is not repentance to say, I repent to-day, and then steal to-morrow; that is the repentance of the world, which is displeasing in the sight of God. Repentance is the second principle.

I have heard many men say, no ordinances are necessary, that belief only in the Lord Jesus Christ is necessary to be saved. I have not learned that myself from any revelation of God to man, either ancient or modern. But on the contrary, faith in Christ, repentance, and baptism for remission of sins were taught by patriarchs and prophets and by Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Baptism for the remission of sins is an ordinance of the Gospel. Says one, baptism is not essential to salvation. Jesus not only taught it but rendered obedience himself to that requirement, not that He was baptized for the remission of sins, but, as He said, "to fulfill all righteousness," thus in this, as in all other respects giving the example for all who follow. When these principles of the Gospel are complied with a man is then a fit subject to receive the Holy Ghost; and this holy gift is bestowed to day as it was anciently, by the laying on of hands by men possessing the authority to administer in the ordinances of the Gospel. These are the first principles of the Gospel which we Latter-day Saints believe in and teach to our fellow-men.

Joseph Smith received the ministration of Angels, and he by revelation organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and he was taught by those who ministered unto him what to teach to the people, which was the everlasting Gospel.

Again, men received the Holy Ghost through the imposition of hands, after being baptized for the remission of sins. The Holy Ghost was imparted in that way, according to the promise of those who preached the Gospel. Joseph Smith when he organized this Church in 1830 organized it by revelation; and while we had hundreds of churches and systems and religions, not a single denomination upon the earth at that time preached the Gospel as taught by the ancient prophets and Apostles, or had a church organized on the earth with prophets and Apostles, or with signs following the believers as in ancient days. Can

you tell of one? I never heard of one until I heard the Elders of this Church preach the Gospel and set forth the order of God. When God commanded Joseph Smith to go forth and organize the Church, what authority had he to do so? None at all until he was ordained under the hands of those who had held the keys of the priesthood upon earth. And I will say to this assembly, in the days of Jesus Christ He taught these principles to the Jews; He brought the Gospel to the Jews and established His kingdom among them, and it came with all its gifts, graces and powers: the sick were healed; devils were cast out; the gifts were manifested among them. But the Jews rejected Him, and they finally put Him to death.—He and His Apostles. He came to His own Father's house but He was not received; and then, according to command, this Gospel went to the Gentiles—we are all Gentiles in a national capacity, we are not Jews, the Jews are another class of men; they put the Savior to death, and have suffered for 1800 years in consequence,—they have been trodden under the feet of the Gentiles even until the present day. Those that took part in that deed and those who sanctioned it said, Let His blood be upon us and our children after us. The Gentile Judge was willing to release Him because he could find no fault in Him; but the feeling and sentiment of the Jews was, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" What infidel is there, no matter who he is, who does not believe in God, let him read the revelations of heaven and see the fulfillment of prophecy from the beginning of Genesis to our day, and he will see them fulfilled to the very letter. There is nothing that has been predicted by Jesus or the Apostles but what has already been fulfilled to the very letter as far as time will admit, and what has not will be. When, I say, the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles it went to them in all its power, its beauty and glory, Priesthood and ordinances as it was offered to the Jews. And Paul, in writing to the Romans told them not to be high-minded, but to fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, who were the Jews, because of their unbelief, how could he be more merciful to the unnatural branches, who were the Gentiles? Has there been the true Church of Christ upon the earth since the Apostles were slain? Can you find a Church upon the earth organized as it was in that day? No, not one. The Gentiles followed the example of the Jews in their unbelief and in putting to death those who bore the holy priesthood; and instead of the Church of Christ has sprung up every kind of Church during the last 1,800 years. But in these last days God has again restored the everlasting Gospel; and any man who believes the Bible must believe the fulfillment of revelation, and he cannot believe in the fulfillment of prophecy without believing that God would send again to the earth angels to deliver that Gospel. And why send an angel for this purpose? Because the Gospel was taken from the earth in consequence of the unbelief of the Gentiles and the powerful opposition that was brought against the comparative few who represented it. And in fulfillment of the revelation of St. John, John the Baptist came to Joseph Smith and conferred upon him, after a period of preparation on his part, the Aaronic Priesthood which authorized him to preach and to baptize for the remission of sins, and to administer the sacrament, but not to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. In due time, however, Peter, James and John appeared to him also and conferred upon him the Melchizedek order of Priesthood and Apostleship, which gave him the power to organize the kingdom of God upon the earth. These are truths whether the world believe them or not. It makes no difference; it is the work of Almighty God, and He is the originator of it. How is it with the Elders of Israel? God has called men from the plow, the hammer and anvil, from the carpenter's bench, etc., unlearned and weak mortals, and they have been sent out to the world to bear record of this new and everlasting gospel restored in our day. And what have they said to the Methodists, the Baptists, and all other religionists and classes of men. God Almighty has given unto me a dispensation of the Gospel and I offer it to you; he that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that I am his servant having His Gospel message to de-

clare to all those to whom I am sent and repents and is baptized for the remission of his sins, shall receive the Holy Ghost. This has been the purport of the message I have borne to men and nations the last fifty years. And now God has nothing to do with us, how is it that we have been able to gather together thousands and tens of thousands from about all nations under heaven by the simple proclamation of the Gospel message. How long would it be before Joseph Smith or any other man who went forth bearing the message we do, and making the promises we make, would be found out as an imposter unless the promises made were genuine and looked in such a way as to give entire satisfaction to those who heard his word? The whole secret, success as far as making converts concerned, is that we preach the same Gospel in all its simplicity, plainness that Jesus preached, that the Holy Ghost rests upon those who receive it, filling hearts with joy and gladness, speakable, and making them do as they then know of the duty for themselves whether it be for man. And this Gospel is that which we offer is what has been Church from its first organization until to-day. And, as often said, had it not been for the Gospel revealed to us, we have labored until we were as Methuselah, and Utah would have been as barren as in 1847 when we first came to the valleys. At that time we were in a barren desert, yes, as barren as the desert of Saxon with no man save the Anglo Saxon race. But through Utah to-day and we have houses and cities, gardens, orchards, meeting-houses and schools and school-houses and colleges, with the blessings of tending the labors of the and a community of people almost every nation taken from various sects and parties, and are here through the inspiration of Almighty God, and I know it, have not had power of ourselves to influence any man or woman to regard these things. They have been influenced by the testimony of Jesus Christ and by the Gospel of the Son of God. These are the principles by which all men are saved. All men are saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, the obedience to the Gospel.

I realize our condition and position occupied by this general knowledge we are looked upon as people, and we are considered ignorant people. There never more epithets heaped upon Christ and the Apostles than the Latter-day Saints. What is this? Are we so much worse than the world? No, we are not. Then is the matter? The Lord has set His hand to His people, and to build up His Church and to establish His Church in the last days; and the world like the doctrine we teach, at the axe at the root of the tree, consequently we have been cut from the time the Church was organized until now and the persecution will continue more or less until He reigns right it is to reign, until the Jesus Christ comes in the clouds of heaven to reward every man according to the deeds done in the body.

Now I want to say to the Latter-day Saints, we are called to a work, and we have been called to work, and we, as Elders, have forth whithersoever we were taking our lives in our hands, selling hundreds and thousands of miles without purse or scrip, have waded swamps and swamps, and have asked my brethren door to door; and have nearly 50 years to this world, what? Was there gold everywhere? No, verily; and what I have done what my brethren have done have done because we were commanded of God. And this position we occupy to-day, we preached and labored at home abroad, and we intend to do our labors, by the help of God, as long as we can have liberty to, and until the Gentiles prove themselves unworthy of eternal life until the judgments of God on the world, which are at the door. Does this generation know awaits them? Does our own? No, the world is ignorant of must, sooner or later, befall the world. Here is the Christian world, professing to believe the Bible, show me wherein any of the prophecies of the prophets, whether