

DISCOURSE

BY

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REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

HAVING been called upon this afternoon to address this congregation, I rise before you trusting that the Holy Spirit, which makes plain to the human mind the things of God, may rest upon me and upon you; that I may be inspired by that spirit to say something which will be of profit to those who hear, and that those who listen to what I may say may be able to understand in the same light and under the same influence as that by which the words are spoken.

The Elders of this Church in ministering as public speakers stand before the people in the name of the Lord. They do not address congregations for the purpose of ventilating the opinions and ideas which they may entertain, but they occupy the position of ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, to speak that which is given to them by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the servants of God are instructed to "treasure up in their hearts continually the words of life" with the promise that if they do this and are diligent in seeking for the mind and will of God, in the very hour that they are needed words shall be placed in their mouths, or ideas be brought up in their minds, which shall be for the benefit of all who hear. It is in this spirit that I endeavor to address the congregation this afternoon and I hope I shall have not only your attention, but the benefit of your faith and prayers, that the spirit of God may rest upon me and upon the congregation also.

We are living upon the earth at a time when there are a great many creeds, a great many different doctrines each professing to be the true faith, the Christian religion. There is a spirit of doubt and division in the world. Men are ever learning but not able to come to a knowledge of the truth. They indulge in a great many speculations. Some good people study the scriptures and endeavor to find out what is divine truth, but their ideas are various; they do not come to the unity of the faith; and the great reason why this is so is because they do not seek to the fountain of light and truth with the expectation of receiving any reply. In olden times God used to speak to the people. He had servants upon the earth who spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost; angels ministered to the sons of men, and truth was revealed in great plainness from the Father. But in these times people have to put up with the ideas and notions that men hold in relation to these truths which were anciently revealed. There is now no voice from heaven, no prophet among the people; there are no inspired apostles; angels have ceased to minister, and to use the words of one of the great divines of the day, "The awful voice of prophecy is silenced forever."

Of course in making use of these remarks I am speaking in relation to what is called the Christian world. The Latter-day saints believe that God is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, and that if he is sought after to-day in the same way that he was sought after yesterday, he will answer in the same manner. We believe that it is just as possible for angels to come to earth in these times as in any former age of the world; we believe that the power of the Holy Ghost is the same to-day as it was thousands of years ago; that divine truth can be made manifest direct from God to the people now as it was in the days of Jesus, or in the days of the prophets who preceded him on the earth.

The religion we Latter-day Saints have received, which we hold to, which we live for, and which a great many of us are willing to die for, if necessary, has come to us by revelation from God in the day and age in which we live. In taking up the writings of the old prophets, in reading the letters written by the ancient Apostles, we find that the religion which God has revealed to us, is the same religion that God revealed to them. What is contained in the Bible corroborates that which we have received, and the spirit which accompanies the preaching of the word to us is similar in its effects to that spirit which accompanied the preaching of the ancient pro-

phets and apostles of the Lord. We find this out by reading that portion of their records which has been left. So that the religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not a mere theory of men. The doctrines which we have received have come to us direct from the Lord in our own time. We are not left to speculation, we are not left to our own theories, but we have defined principles given to us of God for our guidance, for our comfort and for our edification.

Now, there is a disposition existing in the world to-day to go away from the Lord. Men seem to have a desire to follow out their own imaginations, their own ideas and notions, and in consequence of this a great many wrong principles have been received for truth in the Christian world, and this disposition seems to increase. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the saints in his day, advised them to "beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ." Now, that same advice is good for the people in our times; good for the Latter-day Saints; good for the people who compose the various sects of modern Christendom. If we have received the doctrines of Christ, if our feet are planted firmly upon the rock which he has laid, there is no fear of our going astray; but if we depart from that and walk in the ways of men, and are led by their theories and their speculations and their vain philosophy, we are very likely to go astray.

I notice in reading some of the works of modern divines, and noting the progress of religious thought among the people, that there is a doctrine which is becoming very widespread among the people called "Christians," that is, a heresy in regard to the doctrine of our condition in the future. It is believed by a great many people at the present time, that there is no such thing as a literal resurrection of the body; that when this body is laid away in the ground and goes back to the elements out of which it was organized, that is the end of the body, and that it will never come up again. They do not see any need of a literal resurrection of the body; they cannot perceive by what process it can be resuscitated; and not being able to comprehend how this great change can come, how the scattered elements of the body can be brought together again, they reject the doctrine altogether. This is the belief of the people who are called spiritualists or spiritists. This is one of the doctrines of that great delusion of the latter times, that "strong delusion" that the Lord has permitted to come into the world because men would not receive the truth, but turned away from it and loved a lie. It is taught by that rapping and muttering influence, that when the spirit leaves the body and passes into another state, that is the resurrection; that the body will be raised up no more; that the spirit, liberated from the body, will progress from sphere to sphere—how many spheres they do not know—but that there is no further need of the body. This idea is increasing in its hold upon the minds of the people, among the various "Christian" sects, and some of the greatest preachers and divines of the day entertain this idea, philosophize upon it and teach it to their congregations. Now we have the satisfaction of definite knowledge in regard to this matter, as well as all the articles of our creed—if we have such a thing as a formulated creed. The ideas we have in relation to this doctrine have come from God. There is no need of any doubt about it, no need for any speculation. The Lord has revealed something concerning this. It is true he has not revealed the manner in which the resurrection shall be brought about; the Lord has not revealed the philosophy of it in full, he has only given us some ideas concerning it. But he has made the fact very plain that there may be no misunderstanding about it. In the Book of Doctrine and Covenants—which contains many of the revelations that God has given to the church through the Prophet Joseph Smith, we find this doctrine laid down in great plainness. It is stated that the spirit and the body make up the soul of man, and that the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul. We are taught also that there are material elements and spiritual elements; that the spiritual part of our being was in the beginning with God, and that the spiritual and material when inseparably connected receive a fulness of joy, otherwise man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

It takes the spiritual part of man and the material or physical part joined together inseparably to obtain a fulness of joy. When the spirit is separated from the body, a fulness of joy cannot be obtained. When the spirit is joined to the body temporarily under a temporal law, under the law of death, it cannot receive a fulness of joy. The spirit and the body must be joined together in such a way that they will not be divorced again. The spirit and the body must be so joined together that both will be immortal, and in that condition man can receive a fulness of joy.

The Book of Mormon is also very plain upon this subject. I will read one or two texts from that book, and if I have time I may refer to the Bible, to show that the things contained in the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants are the same as contained in the old scriptures. I will read a passage from the 79th page (new edition) of the Book of Mormon, namely:

"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."

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 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."

Now, according to the Book of Mormon the spirits of men, the righteous and the wicked, are to be brought up from the place to which they shall go when they depart from this life. There is no need for any dubiety about this, there is no need for any mistake; it is clear that the separation of the spirit from the body is not the resurrection spoken of in this book.

The prophet Alma, touching on this subject, explained to the people in his day what an angel of God made known, to him. These words which I am about to read to you from the Book of Alma, in the Book of Mormon, are not Alma's ideas and speculations. He says they were revealed to him by an angel. I would advise you to read the 40th chapter, 352 page, new edition. Alma states here that he was very much troubled concerning the doctrine of the condition of people after they passed away from this life. He wanted to know something of the condition of man between death and the resurrection, and he says an angel of God made known to him that there is a space between death and the resurrection, that the spirits of the wicked are in a state of unrest, having a knowledge of all their wickedness and a remembrance of all their transgressions; that they are in a state of fear, looking for the wrath and indignation of God, not knowing what their punishment will be; while on the other hand the spirits of the righteous enter into a state of rest. They have a perfect knowledge of all that God has done for them, and all their acts of righteousness, and they await in peace for the time when their bodies shall be brought forth from the dust to stand in the presence of their God to receive their crown. Alma then goes on to say:

"But this much I say, that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be re-united, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works."

The soul shall be restored to the body and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame."

Now, that is clear and distinct on this point. In regard to the times

and seasons of this resurrection, about which Alma speaks, he said he did not know, but those things he did know were made known to him by an angel, namely, that there is a space between death and the resurrection; that at the resurrection the body and the spirit shall be brought up and restored to each other, and not only the body and spirit but every part and particle belonging to the body; not a hair of the head shall be lost; every joint and muscle and fibre and sinew and every part and particle necessary to make up a perfect physical body for the spirit to dwell in, shall be restored to that spirit in the resurrection. That is the doctrine laid down by the prophet Alma as taught by him by an angel.

The very meaning of the word "resurrection" ought to dispel the idea that the separation of the spirit from the body at death is resurrection. The word itself means "I stand up again." The idea which all the prophets and apostles of old had was that at some future time the voice of God should be uttered, and the dead should stand up again, their bodies should come from the grave; just exactly the doctrine laid down in the Book of Mormon and Book of Doctrine and Covenants. Some have an idea that the people who lived upon the earth before Jesus, had no correct ideas in regard to the future. I have seen such statements published by popular divines of the day, but when we come to take up the Old Testament scriptures we find that the writers, holy men of God who wrote as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, had a distinct and unwavering faith in regard to this same doctrine, that of the resurrection of the body.

The book of Job is said to be the most ancient book of the Bible. I will read a verse or two from the 7th chapter. In the 9th verse we read, "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more." Now, that is a very plain statement of Job's, that when a man goes down to the grave he shall not return. Those who believe in the vain philosophy that I have referred to take a great deal of comfort in quoting that passage and also some sayings of Solomon, the wise man; that is he was a wise man once, but he became a foolish man before he died, not because he married more wives than one, but because he transgressed by marrying strange wives. Solomon in some of his writings speaks in the same way as Job. But I will read a verse from the 14th Chapter of Job.

"As the waters fall from the sea, and the flood decayeth and dryeth up; so man lieth down and riseth not."

That also is a very plain statement, is it not? But Job did not stop here as he did in the 7th chapter, for he continues,

"Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until the wrath be passed, that thou wouldest appoint a set time, and remember me! If a man die shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." Chapter xiv, 12-15.

Read again in the 19th chapter, where he is a little more explicit, commencing at the 23d verse:

"Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book. That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Now, in the first place, Job is speaking in regard to what we all see in this world, in regard to the common lot of mortals. "Man lieth down and riseth not." In saying that Job had no reference to what would take place in the future. He was speaking of the common experience of mankind. But afterward, inspired by the spirit of prophecy, he looked right down to the latter days, in the midst of his afflictions, his trouble and sorrow, his pain of body and anguish of mind, when his friends were turned against him—he looked down to the latter days and wished that his words were written and printed in a book, that the words were graven in the rock with an iron pen and lead put into them, that they might stand as a witness to all future generations,

as a testimony to the resurrection of the body and a rebuke to the vain philosophy of the latter times.

I will now read a verse or two from the book of the Prophet Isaiah, to show that others of the ancients, besides Job, had some idea of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. In the 19th, 20th and 21st verses of the 26th chapter of Isaiah we read:

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy door about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."

Isaiah, you see, had the same spirit as Job. He spoke about the time when the indignation or wrath of God should pass over the earth, and he wished to be hidden in the grave until that time was over, and then he expected the earth to cast out her dead.

I have not time to read the 37th chapter of Ezekiel—you can read it at home—but in that chapter we find that the Lord showed Ezekiel a valley full of dry bones. The Lord asked him whether these bones could live, and he answered, "Thou knowest." Then the Lord told him to prophesy upon these bones, and as he prophesied, there was a noise and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them. Then the Lord again told him to prophesy, and he prophesied as commanded, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Now, we have no need to read the writings of the divines of the present time to find out what this means. Right in the same chapter is given the interpretation.

"These bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the Land of Israel. * * * And shall I put my spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I will place you in your own land. Then ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord."

Now, by these testimonies that I have quoted from the Old Testament scriptures, we find that the people who lived on the earth before the days of Jesus had some knowledge in regard to the future, in regard to the condition of the spirit when it left the body, and also in regard to the resurrection of the body. The wise man Solomon in the Book of Ecclesiastes 12th chapter and 7th verse, speaking in regard to death after giving a very poetical description of the house we live in, says: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." He had some idea in regard to life after death, although if we read some of his writings we might gain the idea that man ended when his body was laid down in the grave.

Now, these doctrines, which we understood by the people before the days of Christ are the same as believed in by the disciples of Jesus the same as Jesus taught. We will take, for instance, Jesus' own declaration in regard to the resurrection in which he says: "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice. And shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Or as reads in the Prophet Joseph Smith's version, "they that have done good unto the resurrection of the just, and they that have done evil in the resurrection of the unjust." Now, according to Christ's own statement to his disciples, all that are in their graves are to come forth, both the righteous and the wicked, just as it is taught in the Book of Mormon. This also is in accordance with what the prophet Daniel—another of those ancients who understood this doctrine—says in the 12th chapter of his book. He speaks of Michael and the great trouble that shall come upon the earth in the latter days and say