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## WHAT IS MAN?

*Discourse delivered in the Tabernacle,  
Salt Lake City, Sunday,  
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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

The choir sang:

"O, my Father, Thou that dwellest."

The hymn to which we have just listened produces, it seems to me, one of the most holy influences that can surround the Saints of God; and that, doubtless, for the reason that it touches one of the most lofty themes connected with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it has suggested to me this afternoon a theme in connection with the Gospel that I believe to be one of the most instructive and inspiring that the mind of man can contemplate. If, therefore, I can obtain through your faith and the goodness of our Father in Heaven, His Spirit, I will speak upon it, and as an aid to its introduction will read to you one of the Psalms of David—the 8th:

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth I who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained:

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

All sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field;

The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

David, doubtless, as was his habit, judging from many expressions in his writings, had been contemplating the heavens, the vastness of them, and the greatness of God's power as witnessed therein; for he says in another place, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech; and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth,

and their words to the end of the world."

Turning from a contemplation of the great works of the Creator, and looking upon man in his insignificance, very naturally he gave expression to the thought contained in this psalm—"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man that thou visitest him?" But notwithstanding there seemed to be in the mind of the poet the idea of the insignificance of man, yet he was careful to observe that God had exalted him above the rest of His creatures that live upon the earth. He took note that the beasts of the field, all sheep and oxen, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, were all placed under the dominion of man. Indeed, if you follow the thoughts of the Prophet David upon this subject, you will discover that in his mind this superiority in man and his dominion over the other creations of God argued for him some special relationship to Deity. True, there are some animals which in particular things seem superior to man; that is, there are some swifter of foot than he, others of keener sight; still others of more sensitive smell; but in none is there that combination which stamps man with superiority? Which of the animals has he not subdued and made subservient to his will? Some yield their strength, some their speed to serve him, and all pay him homage by submitting to his dominion. Nor has man been content with subduing the animal creation alone. He is fast obtaining a mastery over the elements of nature. The winds and ocean currents have long been his servants. The element of fire adds to his comfort and aids him in his labors in a hundred ways. He has made the lightning bear his messages. He annihilates distance. He weighs the sun, the moon and the stars in his balances, and tells us the materials of which they are composed, however great their distances. All this argues for man a superiority over other earth-creatures; and this superiority, coupled with special favors conferred upon man by Deity, proclaims some special relationship between him and God. Man naturally desires to discover that relationship and has often asked, What is man that God is mindful of him? Of his wisdom, however, this is a task that man cannot perform; a problem that he cannot solve. If you doubt what I say, then I pray you take the results of philosophical investigation on the subject, set revelation aside and what have philosophers to offer as a solution of the problem of life? One of the greatest geniuses that has arisen among men describes life as "a walking shadow; a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then

is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." One of our great modern skeptics, Col. Ingersoll said—"Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights, we cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word."

As man by searching cannot find out God, so the wisdom of man is inadequate to the solution of the question propounded by David—"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man, that thou visitest him?" You cannot solve the question by human wisdom. It is only by turning to revelation that we can get a satisfactory answer to the great question. And that gives an answer to which the spirit of man is responsive, accepts it and claims it as its own, and is satisfied with that solution. It is one of the evidences of divine inspiration in the great modern Prophet, who, under God's direction laid the foundation of this latter-day work, that he was enabled through revelation to make answer to this question, and throw a flood of light upon the problem.

I take it that no one present here today is ignorant of the great fact of death. We have met with it in our experience in some form or other. There are parents here who have lost children; there are children who have lost parents; brothers who have lost sisters; sisters who have lost brothers; and if, perchance, there should be any who have not come in contact with death in these near relationships, then all, at least, have lost friends. All have looked upon the dead; and as we gazed into the cold, marble faces of those whom we loved, who is there that has not been struck with the thought on such occasions that what he gazed upon was but the temple, or the house, in which the soul he loved had dwelt. The casket only was before him; the jewel was gone.

We need not engage in any fine-spun speculations about the existence of the spirit. I take it that no man has looked upon the dead who has not been impressed with the truth to which I now invite your attention. We may take it as a fact conceded that man is dual in his organism; composed not merely of the gross materials that make up the body of the flesh and bone; there is the mind or spirit as well. This I, this ego within man, and that is more properly the man, is just as much a fact as the existence of the body. In death we see these—the spirit and body separated.

Our inquiry will lead us to consider