

SERMON BY PRES. JOSEPH SMITH,

At Lamoni, Iowa, May 7, 1894.

Subject, **THE MANY MANSIONS.**

DURING the late conference we were presented with the thoughts of several upon the subject of the resurrection. By one speaker we were given to understand that the resurrection was a conditional one; by another that all men were raised from the dead irrespective of works. It may be that some of you noticed this apparent discrepancy between these speakers, for both of them are ministers of the word; each was abroad representing the church.

The first sermon of the series preached during the session was upon the subject of the resurrection, and was an endeavor to show that the resurrection was intended of God to answer the requirements that had been made a matter of necessity in man's nature by his creation; and the argument was clearly drawn that it was essential, because it was needed. Believing as we do that God in his mercy and in his works conformed to the design previously conceived; and reasoning as we do that we are living very near the end of time, we believe it to be consistent that God should have perfected his design from the first; and that in every dispensation the development of his will, his requirements concerning the moral nature of man were like that of every other dispensation; and that each succeeding generation or dispensation had its characteristics peculiar to itself. But these characteristics would have a relation to every other dispensation that had gone before. If it were not so, then we could not credit God with having comprehensive understanding from the first. It would detract from our understanding of his characteristics. And for us to think that he could in any sense have forgotten his design, he being divine, would detract from the consistent understanding that we might have of him; of his will, of his power, of the wonderful munificence of his love toward man.

It is thought by some that we believe too much; that we not only believe in Isaiah, Ezekiel, the prophets of the Old

and New Testament times, but also believe in the prophets of modern times. We not only believe that God revealed himself to man in that distant period of time; to Noah, to Jacob, to Isaac, and to Abraham, and to men of the New Testament times; but we believe that he absolutely reveals himself now; and from all the history of man from the first there has been a persistent, a consistent revelation of Christ's will to man; especially to them who have tried to serve him.

It is not our purpose this morning to dwell exhaustively on the idea of the resurrection, but to touch on some points connected with it, that some of the speakers who were heard during the conference dwelt upon, and the revelation of God in this time to us as a people.

We have before us what we call the Book of Mormon; and if we were to take this book into any ordinary congregation away from the town where we dwell and undertake to speak from it from the pulpit, it would strike the conservative ones as something out of line; and it might arouse such antagonism that we might not be permitted to speak more than once. To us this book is a peculiar one; and we have frequently known that evidences concerning the Book of Mormon and its divinity have been had by individuals outside of the church, as well as those of its members. And I have often wondered that individuals not represented in the church have been made to understand that the Book of Mormon is of divine origin; that in itself it contains the evidence of its truthfulness; and its historical statements and the revelations in the book were certainly true. I may confess before you without any hesitancy that I have a clearer testimony of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon than I have of the Bible, because I have heard a voice from on high stating distinctly as one man would speak unto another, "The Book of Mormon is of divine origin." I do not wish you to understand on account of this that I place

the Book of Mormon before the Bible; because I believe it to be secondary, not first; and I will give you my reasons for that—reading from the book itself, there is a book called the Book of Mormon in the Book of Mormon. The volume itself is called the Book of Mormon, but there is a book written within it that is called specifically the Book of Mormon; and I read from the third chapter of this book, and fourth paragraph:—

“Know ye that ye must come to the knowledge of your fathers, and repent of all your sins and iniquities, and believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God, and that he was slain by the Jews, and by the power of the Father he hath risen again, whereby he hath gained the victory over the grave; and also in him is the sting of death swallowed up.”

It has been said by some—and good men too—that the Book of Mormon did not teach faith in Jesus Christ; that it absolutely ignored the claims of Jesus Christ; but here we have the specific statement that individuals to whom this work was to come were to be brought to the knowledge of their fathers, and that Jesus Christ came that we might have life, and peace, and gain the victory over the grave.

“And he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead, whereby man must be raised to stand before his judgment seat.”

Now, mark the language. It does not say that he *may* be raised, but it says *he must* be raised.

“And he hath brought to pass the redemption of the world, whereby he that is found guiltless before him at the judgment day, hath it given unto him to dwell in the presence of God in his kingdom, to sing ceaseless praises with the choirs above, unto the Father, and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, which are one God, in a state of happiness which hath no end. Therefore repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this record, but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews, which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you.”

We have here a statement of the record (the Bible) which should come from the Jews unto the Gentiles.

“For behold, this is written for the in-

tent that you may believe that; and if ye may believe that, ye will believe this also; and if ye believe this, ye will know concerning your fathers, and also the marvelous works which were wrought by the power of God among them; and ye will also know that ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; therefore ye are numbered among the people of the first covenant; and if it so be that ye believe in Christ, and are baptized, first with water, then with fire and with the Holy Ghost, following the example of our Savior according to that which he hath commanded us, it shall be well with you in the day of judgment.”

We have here a complete indorsement of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; of the gospel teaching among men; and the clearer statement that if we believe this record, we will believe the record which comes from the Jews. Can anyone blame me for believing the Book of Mormon when it points me to the word of God, to the record which came from Jerusalem too?

I read from this record of the Jews, in the fourteenth chapter of St. John: “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas [the doubting man] said unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” Jesus saith unto him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

Here we have a statement touching Jesus,—and it is a peculiar one to me, and always has been,—that it seemed to be placed before these tried and tempted ones, the salvation that Jesus was going to give them through obedience. It presented to them the most comprehensive hope which could possibly be placed within their reach; that if he went away he should come again; and when he did come again, it would be after he had prepared a place for them, that where he was there they might always be. If there is one hope better than another in the gospel, it is this, that after all the care and anxie-

ties of this life; after all the wondrous struggling with fears within and foes without, the overcoming of conditions by which we are surrounded, the environments by which we are encompassed; we have the assurance of him who has said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, in the place that I have prepared for you."

It has been said by some who have believed in the economy of Jesus Christ that the condition of the hereafter was not specified; that he did not speak of it in a clear way that they might understand. He said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions." He would have told them had it been otherwise than this; therefore there was no necessity for him to tell them that there were many preparations made for them. But turning to them specifically he says, "When I go, I go to prepare a place for you, and will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."

I may be pardoned in presenting to you in this line my own conclusions upon the subject, although some of the brethren that are listening to me may differ from me in that which I present. The Scriptures say that in the great universe of God there have been prepared from before the foundation of the world, independent, perhaps, of the mission of Jesus Christ; it being ordained that only those whom the Almighty has selected and foreordained shall partake of that which is prepared for men through Jesus Christ, wonderful preparations of households upon households, many mansions, that are to be disposed of by Jehovah, independently of Jesus Christ and the gospel which he came to make manifest unto man; and, that in these mansions there will be places for every human being who has been born into the world, who has ever had a place or ever will have a place upon earth since the morning of time to the end thereof. There will be in these mansions, wherever they may be, or of whatever character they are, places prepared for the great mass of humanity; and they shall have their part that has been prepared from the foundation of the world by the Divine Being. Now you may ask me if this be true, why the gospel is authorized to be preached by and

through Jesus Christ? I answer, that when Christ came on earth he certified that there would be a place prepared for them who would obey him, and that he was going to prepare that place; and that he could not return and take them unto himself until that place was prepared. And if we undertake to say that our place shall be in the place that was prepared of the Almighty before the foundation of the world, we certify that we are not prepared to take our lot among the pure and the good, who have been made so by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ, but are prepared to take our places among the Heathen and every other class of men that are born into the world, live, die, and are rewarded without Christ. Now the reason I believe that we should preach Christ and him crucified is that men may have the salvation offered unto the obedient through Christ, as I have just read to you from the Book of Mormon.

The Apostle Paul gives us to understand in reference to it that every man shall be raised in his own order; every man. It simply comprehends the whole world, as if he had said, all men, without distinction of condition; all men shall have their opportunities. What is the necessity then of any specific struggling for this salvation? I will tell you. In my opinion there is a great necessity for so struggling, for if a man prepares himself here for any specific calling, for a place that is higher and better than his present condition, he will secure that which he labors for. So it is with those who are working in Christ; when they shall have reached forth, when they shall have attained to that which God commanded through Jesus Christ, there shall be no place so high, so good, but what they shall be entitled to receive it. Now let me illustrate this; I can do this personally and hurt no one, and yet I hope to goodness it will strike some hearts. I used to be inclined to be fretful when things didn't go right, and I am worried when things don't go right, naturally; and when I began to study what were the characteristics of a Christian I learned that it was incompatible with the Spirit of Christianity for one who was learning of Christ to give way to such feeling; but that I must overcome it, in order that there might be nothing within me that

was not in order with that which was from above. I remember that one morning my little boy came to me and said, "Pa, lend me your knife." I didn't hear him the first time, and he asked me again. I snapped out some answer, like a man will do sometimes, and I overheard him say to his mother, "Pa's cross this morning!" Under that peculiar discipline that should characterize the life of every one that is inclined to do good I went back and gave the boy my knife. If it had been anything under the shining sun that I had, of any worth, I would have given it. This was a discipline of the heart, a discipline of the mind; and it is by the discipline we pass through by which the life of the disciple of Christ is made better and he is prepared and made worthy for the life which is to come. I felt better by giving heed to such discipline than if I had not done so. I would not only have displeased my wife and child, but I would have displeased my Father in heaven. O, how I have pitied men when I have seen them giving way to their dispositions, to their ugly tempers, and making their dumb animal servants to suffer, which God never intended should so suffer at the hands of man! I remember passing by a man's place one day—he had a bad temper, and he had a good team. He was jerking that poor team from one side to the other. That man went out of the church, and the reason why he went out of the church was, he acknowledged before men and God, that he could not keep his temper. But afterward he returned humbly to the church, and has been trying to live a consistent life in Christ ever since. Why? Because he knows that in Christ is offered to him life that is higher and better than that that is found in the mansions referred to as prepared of God for them that are not prepared to dwell with Christ. There is a preparing for them that live the life that Christ has offered that they may be where he is.

But are we not all going to be where God and Christ are? And I answer you, No. The Heathen are to have a part in the first resurrection, as our philosophy goes; but we are not prepared to say what that part shall be. That is the reason we have lifted up our heads and rejoiced in the introduction of what is called the Andover heresy. There was

one of their missionaries who came back from a foreign mission whose mind was sufficiently large to take in all creations; and when he went before the Missionary Board to see if there could not be a provision made in their profession of faith to take in those Heathen who had died without having had a chance to hear the gospel, and the board by vote answered him no, he had the moral courage then to say "I cannot go back and represent Christianity as it has been taught to me, and as this vote of the board enforces it." Now, we lift up our hearts and say we are glad for the Andover heresy. Why? Because we believe that both here and hereafter men must have an offer of life in Christ; must have opportunity to reject or receive the gospel message, and obtain or lose the crown and glory in the place which Jesus has to offer.

Where is that place to be, brethren? I remember a lady saying that she thanked God that no Mormon would ever go to heaven. My mother-in-law said, "Joseph, what do you think of that?" I said, "that is all right." She looked at me with wonder. I said, "She is right." Again she looked at me with horror, and said, "Why, don't you expect to go to heaven?" I replied, "Not the heaven she refers to." "Why," she said, "don't all of you expect to go to heaven?" "The heaven this woman is talking about is beyond the bounds of time and space. The heaven we expect to go to is on this earth; and we cannot receive it until we are prepared; and it must be prepared by fire. The place will be prepared for them who are entitled to receive it."

Is there anything extraordinary in that proposition? I simply say, No. It simply brings to us the thought that our everlasting home will be a tangible, a substantial one.

Some may say, "I don't want to stay on this earth." Why not? It is now a pretty place; that which has been brought upon it by the rain and the sunshine has made it beautiful; the trees are budding and blossoming for the fall fruitage. You and I would not care to be in any other paradise than this now. It is infinitely beautiful now; what will it be when it shall have gone through the process of purification; when the hand of

the Almighty has been at work upon it; when Jesus shall have made this beautiful earth, as we read of in Revelation, where God and Christ shall be the light thereof, and the city shall be of such a wonderful character that none can enter there but those who come unto God; and none can come unto him except through Christ? I have thought of it a great deal in the thirty years in which I have been preaching; I have thought of how man should have to be saved, so much; and when I have thought upon the direct revelations of God in his manifestations in the Old and New Testament Scriptures; of the manifestations coming to us in direct revelation, and the statement made to us, "Thou shalt take the things which thou hast received, which have been given in my scriptures for a law, to be my law, to govern my church; and he that doeth according to these things, shall be saved, and he that doeth them not shall be damned, if he continues," I find in this a hope so long, and so deep; a liberty so grand, that it seems there is nothing exceptional about it. It reaches from the first dispensation in the days of Adam down through all the dispensations in time, and to that which shall be hereafter; and when the Lord says to his disciples, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," it comes to me with all the force as if I were listening to him. Why? Because he says, "If I go away I will prepare a place for you, and when I come I will receive you to myself, that where I am you may always be."

I have many times thought, if some of these young men and young women, and I may say these middle aged and elderly men and women who ultimately desire to stand in the presence of God, and his Christ,—if that was their hope that they would live more circumspectly now,—because they would expect if he was standing before them that he would look upon that which is evil with disfavor, and he must look with favor upon that which is good. The one that looketh up to God with a desire to come unto him, can have this blessed consolation, that he will be accepted of him, for as Jesus said of the Jews who rejected him that he would have taken them in his arms long since, but they would not. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If we

could only carry with us these thoughts from morning till night, they would serve to make us humble and pure. Why cannot we do that? It is one thing to believe in God in theory, and another thing to believe in him in fact. Of what effect would my belief in Jesus Christ be, if from morning till night I disregarded his warning to come unto him? Of what effect would a belief in Jesus Christ be, if I could not bring myself to a comprehension of his commandments, and myself into subjection to them? I must believe in him in the same sense that I believe in anything else; and I must put forth an effort to receive his sayings. I remember of reading a story when I was a boy; I have thought of it many times as illustrating the manner in which a man ought to believe. There was a captain sailing a vessel many years ago, so the story goes, and he had a venturesome son on board. This lad was all the time climbing the rigging. They came one day and told the captain that his son had climbed to the top of the mast. Everybody was expecting to see the child fall. If he fell, he would fall on the deck and crush himself; he was liable to grow dizzy. But he heard his father's voice saying, "Look up!" The boy obeyed the father and looked up; and continued to do so, until a sailor came to his relief. There was an abiding faith; the child's eye looked up. If he had not he would have fallen. And let me say to you, Look up; never mind the things that are told; never mind those things that are past, but look up to God and to Christ, that he may reward you in the mansions of God. And in them there is room for the great mass of mankind. And for those who are in Christ, there is a better place, a better resurrection; that which is the noblest and highest in the gift of God—for him who shall be found worthy of it, in all the dispensations that are past, as well as the present. And we are told that it is in Christ it is found; it may not be found out of Christ.

I heard last Sunday night an effort made to induce those who are halting between two opinions to make themselves approved of God. It seems to me there is but one way to do this, and that is for them to put themselves in the way of his commandments, to be born of him; and in that way men may come unto him, and

there may we, if we hear, heed, and obey him, always be. Now, may we make this effort; and when we have done it we

shall be satisfied, because we have been prepared in both spirit and mind for that which he in his goodness has to give us.

(Reported for the *Herald* by Bro. E. Stafford.)

SYNOPSIS OF SERMONS

Delivered at Southern California Reunion, Downey, California, July, 1894.

BISHOP E. L. KELLEY:—

MEN and women have a choice, and if they choose religion it will make them free, and not slaves. The idea has gained ground that if we accept religion we may still follow our own wills. This is not so; if we choose religion, we choose God's will, and that will gives us freedom; otherwise we shall be under the bondage of sin. The choice will bring us the highest good, eternal life; or the greatest evil, everlasting death.

Many people believe that God will make them good whether or not, but God wants men and women from choice and not from compulsion. Let us become acquainted with the Deity, then. Each one's will and the will of God should be in unity. Our will is not always in accord with that which is true and good, and religion comes in as a correction of the will. It will change that which is evil to that which is good and true. Though we may choose whether we will have religion or not, we must remember that whatsoever a man sows that will he reap. Obedience to the will of God is religious life, and brings reward.

Christ said his sheep would go in and out and find pasture. Is not this liberty? God hath not sent reason and conscience to be the final authorities in matter of religion. Reason may be perverted, conscience may be uneducated. The only teacher that is infallible to teach us the word is the Holy Spirit. Jesus was obedient to the word: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." He also said, "I do not speak of myself." Men and woman have an expressed will of their own, and Christ himself had a will not always of God. If this was so with Christ, let us examine our will and see if ours is contrary to God's will. Jesus said, "I can of mine own self do nothing;" and in the garden of Geth-

semane he said, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." This was a severe test for Jesus; the world on one hand and the little group of disciples that were to be scattered on the other, and would lose faith in him for a time. He prayed this three times, but every time determined to do his Father's will. How many are willing to say, "Not my will, but thine be done?"

We must not only be Christians by name, but we must walk in righteousness. We must educate our conscience. God does not force people into the kingdom, but he calls, persuades, and entreats. The Father has set a straight and narrow way before us; men have many ways.

The Latter Day Saints cannot always have their own wills and if we find the instruction of Scripture is contrary to our will, then we must strive to bring ourselves into harmony with it. We should be reconciled to our brethren, our friends, and our enemies, for outside of God there is no safety. God's word says, love your brethren; bear no malice; be patient. We are so prone to seek our own way, but we must strive to become like our Savior and say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

ELDER CHARLES BALY:—

THE speaker used "Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness" as the basis of his remarks. This seeking should be an intelligent one. Being in a sinful state, we must seek his kingdom to be free from our sins. Adam and Eve became impure. Purity cannot spring from impurity, hence the need of a plan whereby the whole human race could become possessors of the rights had before the fall; for this reason came Christ. Why should we first seek the kingdom of