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Abstract: This article briefly reviews the history of the gospel, from the creation to the present day. It concludes with advice on how to follow God's will and avoid the snares of the adversary.

God's Dealings with Mankind*

By President Anthony W. Ivins

I sincerely desire, my brethren and sisters, during the few moments which I may occupy this morning, of the time which is allotted to us, that I may be sustained by your faith and prayers. I feel my dependence upon the Lord, possibly as I have never felt it before, because the older I become, the greater my experience, the more I come to realize that the power of God, our Father, alone can make us strong.

THE CREATION

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

If the chronology of the Bible is correct—and I know of none better—nearly six thousand years have elapsed since the declaration which I have read was made, and which is the first paragraph from the book of Genesis. It will be observed that this statement, like all others made by the Lord, is a definite, abstract declaration of fact. It is not stated as a theory, a thing which may or may not have been, depending upon the opinions of man for proof.

God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them, and said unto them be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The story of the creation of man, and the purpose for which he was placed upon the earth, is told, not in its fullest detail, of course, in the brief scripture from which I have quoted. Of the story of man during the Adamic dispensation, we know but little. The history of one thousand five hundred years and more is told in the Bible on ten short pages, and modern revelation gives us but brief account of the happenings between the creation and the deluge.

MAN GOVERNED BY CONTRARY POWERS

This much, however, is made clear to us: That from the earliest period of his existence until the present man has lived a dual life, has been governed by one of two influences, each diametrically opposed to the other. From the beginning these two powers have striven for the mastery, one leading men on to higher ideals, teaching faith, hope, charity, patience, love, self sacrifice, humility, righteousness and justice. The other leading men away from these divine ideals, teaching selfishness, personal ambition, love of power, disregard for virtue, chastity, equality and self sacrifice.

One teaching that man is the offspring of Deity, created in the image of God, and placed upon the earth endowed with intelligence to discern between good and evil, between right and wrong, and that the Creator would hold him responsible for the use he made of the agency which had been bestowed upon him. The other teaching that

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man is responsible to no power other than that which he himself has created, and that his future state is not influenced by, nor dependent upon, allegiance to, or acknowledgment of a supreme being. These two influences were manifested soon after our first parents were placed upon earth.

From God, our Father, through his Only Begotten Son, came teachings which, if adhered to, would lead man back into the presence of the Father, and redeem him from the transgression into which he had fallen, because he had listened to Lucifer, a son of the morning, who had rebelled against God, and because of his rebellion had been cast down with his angels, banished from the presence of the Father, and had become Perdition, destined to fight against God, to be the father of lies, and the enemy of all that is good.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Father talked with Adam, making plain to him that he would provide, through his Only Begotten Son, a Savior, and means by which redemption would come to his posterity, as the people multiplied they refused to listen to his teachings, and came to love Satan more than God.

ENOCH SENT TO CALL THE PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE

Before the birth of Seth, who was obedient to the teachings of his father, Adam, and became a preacher of righteousness, the people had become sensual and devilish. Cain had learned, through the teachings of Satan, that by taking the life of his brother Abel he could become possessed of his flocks and herds, he had been taught that by combining in oath-bound societies power could be obtained by the shedding of blood, and war and bloodshed prevailed among the people.

At this time the Lord sent Enoch to call the people to repentance, and he went forth testifying to the redemption which would come in the meridian of time, through the atonement which was to be made by the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, but they refused to listen, and so great was their opposition to Enoch, and enmity toward those who accepted his word, that it became necessary for the Lord to take them from the earth.

THE PROPHECIES AND WORK OF NOAH

Again the Lord sent his prophet to warn the people, and rescue them from the power of Satan, who held them in bondage. Noah, who was the son of Lamech, who was the son of Methuselah, who was the son of Enoch, went among the people prophesying that except they renounced their allegiance to Satan, and returned to the Lord they would be utterly destroyed. Again the message fell upon deaf ears, only Noah and his sons, and their families being saved when the windows of heaven were opened, and the floods covered the earth.

Thus the first effort made by the Lord to teach his children the plan by which they might be redeemed, and brought back into his presence, had failed, so far as the great majority was concerned, one

thousand five hundred and fifty years after they had been placed upon the earth.

After having witnessed this great manifestation of the power of God, and the result which is inevitable to those who follow after Satan, for he sooner or later leads people to death, one would think that the lesson would always be remembered. Noah and his sons went out from the ark humbled and convinced, for they had witnessed the destruction of their race, but the lesson was soon forgotten. Two hundred and fourteen years after the ark rested on Mount Ararat the people were again traveling in the broad road which leads to destruction. They had again turned from the worship of the true God to the worship of idols.

THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM AND THE RISE OF ISRAEL

At this time there occurred an event which was to have a more direct effect upon you and me than any which had hitherto transpired. From his home in Chaldea the Lord called Abraham, and taking him up into Palestine entered into covenant with him, that notwithstanding the fact that he was a childless man, he would make his posterity innumerable, and would give Palestine to him and his children for an everlasting inheritance, and that through him all of the nations of the earth would be blessed.

In fulfilment of the word of the Lord Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah, and he became the father of Jacob, who was the father of the twelve patriarchs, the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. Again the keys of the Priesthood were conferred upon men, again the prophets declared the great plan of human redemption, again the law of sacrifice was restored by which the people were taught that an infinite sacrifice would be provided, by which they were to be redeemed from death, because He who was to come would be the first fruits of the resurrection from the dead.

At one time it appeared that the word of the Lord would not be fulfilled, for Israel left Palestine, and went into Egypt, where for a period of more than two hundred years, the greater part of the time in servitude, they adopted the customs and idolatrous worship of the Egyptians. But the purposes of the Lord were not to be frustrated, and he called his servant Moses who led Israel out from the Egyptian bondage, and back to the promised land, the land which the Lord had given to their father Abraham to be an everlasting inheritance.

ISRAEL, UNDER DAVID AND SOLOMON, A DOMINANT NATION

The Lord again showered blessings upon the people, until under David and Solomon, their prophet kings, they became one of the dominant nations of the world.

During the Israelitish period the Lord again raised up prophets who testified, as prophets had testified in earlier dispensations, that the Lord would send, through the lineage of David, the Messiah,

who would be the Redeemer of the world. Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would conceive and bear a Son, whose name should be called Immanuel, and that he would take away the sins of the world.

The time had come when the Lord was again to offer redemption to the people, when another gospel dispensation was to be ushered in, the effect of which would be of greater importance than any which had gone before, or would follow after. The appearance of prophets, warning the people to turn from the service of Satan, and serve the Lord, was not its outstanding feature. The Lord himself, in the person of his Only Begotten Son, was to come to earth, that through him unconditional redemption from death might be wrought out for all mankind, and forgiveness for personal sin assured through obedience to the doctrines of the gospel which he would teach.

The Jewish people, blinded by the teachings of men, because of their prejudices, their traditions, their pride and faithlessness, failed to recognize in Jesus Christ, Shiloh, to whose coming they had long looked forward, influenced as they were by Satan rather than by the Lord, as generations before them had been.

THE COMING AND THE MISSION OF CHRIST

In vain the Redeemer pleaded with them, in vain he wept as he gazed upon the holy city, and contemplated the ruin which must inevitably come. In vain he warned the people of the consequences which would follow rejection of his word. The power of the Almighty which was manifested in his works, the love of God exemplified in his ministry, none of these things could move hearts made adamant by the power of the evil one.

Christ was persecuted, ridiculed, his message rejected, and finally he was put to death by the most ignominious process known to man, and that by his own people whom he had come to redeem. In part his mission had failed, but the great purpose of his coming had been accomplished, for the bands of death had been broken, the prison doors had been opened and the captives set free, death could no longer forever hold captive the spirits of men.

CHRIST REJECTED BY THE JEWS

The Church which Christ and his disciples established struggled heroically for existence, but the evil one so dominated the minds of men, persecution was so intense, that the keys and power of the Priesthood were withdrawn, the ordinances of the gospel changed, until the Lord ceased to recognize the Church as his.

The prophets had foreseen and declared all of these conditions. They saw the dispersion of Israel, the suffering of the Jewish people, because of their rejection of the Savior, who had been sent for their redemption. They looked forward to a time which they all desired to see, a day when the Lord would set his hand for the last time to redeem his people, when Satan would be bound, be banished from

the earth, and his power to tempt mankind, and lead them on to destruction, cease.

A NEW GOSPEL DISPENSATION

It was a period when a new gospel dispensation was to be ushered in, when the Lord would again offer salvation to the people of the world, when he would gather in the outcasts of Israel, when he would prune his vineyard for the last time, restore the keys of his Priesthood, and consummate the work which had been commenced in the beginning. When he would send his Only Begotten Son to earth again, this time to reign as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The time, the place, the manner of this restoration were plainly outlined by the prophets. It was to be in the latter days, the dispensation of the fulness of times; a time when Satan would rage in the hearts of the children of men, when men's hearts would fail because of fear, when there would be war, and rumors of war, when the sea would heave itself beyond its bounds and the whole earth be in commotion.

At such a time a light was to break forth among those who sit in darkness, which light was to be the fulness of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This gospel, the Lord himself declared, shall be preached in all the world, as a witness unto all people, and then shall the end come.

THE GATHERING FORETOLD

The place to which scattered Israel was to be gathered was plainly indicated. It was not to be upon the islands of the sea, not upon the broad plains nor in the open vallies, but in the tops of the mountains, in a country which had been regarded as a barren waste, where the desert would be made glad because of those who were to redeem and convert it into fruitful fields. To such a place people from all nations were to flow, that they might be taught the law of the Lord, and learn to walk in his paths.

That a work could be inaugurated, having for its purpose the conquest of sin, the subjugation of Satan, and his final banishment from the earth, without resistance on his part is not to be expected. Knowing that the hosts of heaven were being marshaled for the last great struggle between the powers of light and darkness, of good and evil, of right and wrong, he has fought, as never before, to defeat the purposes of the Almighty.

THE PERSONAGE WHO INAUGURATED THE WORK

When the time came for the opening of the present gospel dispensation, Joseph Smith, who was to be made the instrument through whom the work would be inaugurated, moved upon by the Spirit of the Lord, went into the woods to pray. The effort made by Satan to prevent the accomplishment of the purposes of the Lord, is told by Joseph Smith as follows:

"After I had retired to the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to the Lord. I had scarcely done so when I was immediately seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue, so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time that I was doomed to sudden destruction. But exerting all my powers to call upon God, to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was about to sink into despair, and abandon myself to destruction, not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being, just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

"It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound."

THIS RESTORED GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM TO BE PREACHED IN
ALL THE WORLD

This gospel of the kingdom was to be preached in all the world, as a witness to all people. In 1837 Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde and others were sent to Great Britain to bear the message of the restoration to the people of that country, which was to contribute such strength to the Church. They arrived there on the 20th of July. Converts were made to the divinity of the mission of Joseph Smith, and a time appointed when the ordinance of baptism was to be administered to those who had accepted the truth. Sunday was the day when this ordinance was to be solemnized.

EFFORTS OF THE EVIL ONE TO PREVENT THE PURPOSES OF GOD

The efforts put forth by the evil one, to prevent the accomplishment of the purposes of the Lord, on the night before the Sunday indicated, is told by Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde, as follows. Heber C. Kimball says: "While I was thus engaged I was struck with great force, by some invisible power, and fell senseless to the floor. The first thing I remembered was being supported by Elders Hyde and Richards, who were praying for me. I then arose and sat upon the bed, when a vision was opened to our minds, and we could plainly see the evil spirits who foamed and gnashed their teeth at us. They came toward us like armies rushing to battle."

Orson Hyde, in a letter written to Heber C. Kimball, at a later date, says: "Every circumstance which occurred in that scene of devils is just as fresh in my recollection as it was at the time of its occurrence. While you were apparently senseless and lifeless upon the floor, and on the bed, after we had laid you there, I stood between you and the devils and fought them face to face, until they began to diminish in number and retreat from the room."

EFFORTS AND METHODS ADOPTED BY THE EVIL ONE TO THIS END

Failing in his endeavor to prevent the restoration of the gospel, and the organization of the Church, the evil one has concentrated his

efforts to prejudice, by falsehood and misrepresentation, the people of the world against the truth. Misrepresentation, persecution, in some instances death, have followed the elders of the Church wherever they have gone, and not satisfied with the effort put forth among the people of the world, Satan has, by every strategy known to him, endeavored to lead away from the Church those who have entered into covenant with the Lord that they will serve him, and keep his commandments.

The means which he employs for the accomplishment of his purposes, are many and varied. Permit me to read from the Book of Mormon:

“Wo unto them that turn aside the just for a thing of naught, and revile against that which is good, and say that it is of no worth! For the day shall come when the Lord God will speedily visit the inhabitants of the earth; and in that day when they are fully ripe in iniquity they shall perish.

“But behold, if the inhabitants of the earth shall repent, of their wickedness and abominations they shall not be destroyed, saith he Lord of Hosts. For the kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be stirred up to anger against that which is good, and perish; for behold at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

“And others he will pacify, and lull them away into carnal security that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth all is well, and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

“And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell, and he sayeth unto them, I am no Devil, for there is none, and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasp them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance.”

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE ENEMY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Have you, my brethren and sisters, experienced the effect of these various efforts of the evil one to shatter your faith? Has he ever whispered in your ear, when you have gone to the Lord in prayer, that there was no one to hear and answer you? At times when your prayers have not been answered, as you may have desired, has his voice whispered to you that it was useless to pray? Has doubt and uncertainty entered your minds where faith and hope had been before? Has he attempted, by flattery and praise of the world to persuade you that you are great and strong, and do not need the strength which comes from the Lord? Has he filled your heart with ambition, thirst for wealth and power, banishing from you the spirit of humility and self-sacrifice, without which it is impossible to please the Lord? Has he whispered in your ear that violation of the law of chastity is not a grave offense, that you may lie a little, steal a little, take advantage of one because of his words, that you may disregard and violate the law of the land, or the law of the Lord, and be justified?

All such suggestions come from the enemy of righteousness, to whom I have made reference, and to whose strength and power I have desired to call your attention in my remarks. If we transform

the mental pictures which are photographed upon our minds by this power, into actions, we are in the grasp of Satan, from which only sincere repentance can rescue us.

HOW SHALL WE FORTIFY AGAINST THESE SHAFTS OF EVIL?

By what process may we be fortified and made impregnable against these shafts of the enemy? We must put on the armor of righteousness, and keep it constantly bright in the service of the Lord. We must keep in constant communion with him through prayer.

Prayer is the key which opened this gospel dispensation, it is the channel through which the Son communed with the Father, through which Saints were strengthened to endure, and rejoice in persecution, the gateway through which the repentant sinner may find his way back to God.

Are the Latter-day Saints forgetting this obligation which they owe to the Lord, this one source of strength against the power of Satan? Are we regular in our family prayers, do we go to the Lord in secret, and put our trust in him in all of the activities of life? Let these presidents of stakes, these seventies, bishops, ward teachers and Church members who are present ask themselves these questions, and answer them. Let me again read briefly from the Book of Mormon:

"Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you.

"Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save.

"Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him.

"Cry unto him when ye are in your fields, yea, over all of your flocks.

"Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all our household, both morning, mid-day, and evening.

"Yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies.

"Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness.

"Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in them.

"Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase.

"But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness.

"Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer to him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you."

My brethren and sisters, these words of the Lord apply to us today, as they applied to those to whom they were delivered in times gone by. The power of the evil one is not broken; he rules the world today. The lust for power, ambition, selfishness, class distinction, the hatred of one race toward another, all of these things are inspired by the same influence which led away our first parents.

HOW WE MAY KNOW THE WILL OF GOD

A person said to me the other day: "What is the use of trying? The will of the Lord will be done, anyhow."

The trouble, my brethren and sisters, is that the will of the Lord

has never been done, from the beginning to the present, so far as it applies to the people at large. It was not his will that the people should perish in the flood. He repeatedly called them to repentance, and promised that destruction should be stayed, if they would only return to him.

It was not his will that Israel should be scattered, and the Jewish people suffer as they have, it was because of their transgression. It is not his will that turmoil, war and bloodshed prevail in the world today. These conditions are all because of lack of faith on the part of the people, and because they refuse to listen to the voice of the Lord, as it has come to us through his servants, the prophets.

The Lord has repeatedly called the people to repentance, has repeatedly said that redemption might come, if they would return to him, and renounce their allegiance to the evil one. In this dispensation he has said that Zion might have been redeemed had the faith of the people been sufficient.

It is true that the Lord has decreed certain definite unchangeable purposes, and these he will accomplish. How may we know, then, the will of the Lord, and distinguish between his works and those of Satan? The key is a simple one. Everything which persuades to do that which is good, is from the Lord. Whatever is evil, and persuades men to do that which is not good, is from the evil one.

REPENTANCE NECESSARY

Have not we, ourselves, been witnesses of the inevitable results which come to those who follow after Satan? Never before in modern times, and I believe not in ancient times either, has the necessity for repentance been more plainly manifest than in our day.

THE NATIONS HAVE AGAIN REFUSED TO LISTEN TO GOD'S CALL TO PEACE

It was not the will of the Lord that we should become involved in the greatest war the world has ever known, it is not his will that the nations are divided and in strife today, that war clouds are again gathering which threaten the peace of the world, and the very existence of civilization. It is because men refuse to listen to the voice of the Lord, who is calling them to peace, and good will one toward the other. Peace can be established at any moment, it could have been established long ago, if the people of the world would only unite in a determined effort to prevent war. Ridicule it as you may, make light of it, oppose it, the fact remains that never in the history of modern time, has such opportunity been held out to the people for the establishment of peace, as that which has come in our day. Humbled, in sorrow and mourning, when the time came that war might have been forever suppressed, when conditions might have been established which would have made war impossible, the nations refused to listen.

Again they started in the broad road, which leads to destruction. Again selfishness, pride, love of power, the exalting of one

nation above another, one race above another, menaces the world, and the civilization which is upon it.

MAY THE TIME SOON COME WHEN THE WORLD WILL TURN FROM
EVIL TO GOOD

God grant that the time may soon come when the people of the world will learn, from the experiences of the past, which we seem slow to profit by, that it rests with them, with us, to turn from all that leads us away from the teachings of the Redeemer, to turn from evil to good, lest God's judgment come upon the people of the world, and they be so humiliated and decimated that there will be none to offer resistance, when the time of redemption shall finally come.

God bless you, my brethren and sisters, fortify us against the power of the evil one, make us strong in righteousness and good works, that we may be accepted of the Lord, and keep our feet planted firmly in the path which leads back into his presence, I humbly pray, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

A Prairie Night

Prairie Night!

Above, a million mystic orbs at peace
Yet silver-hued amid the velvet blue.
Powdered with cloud-dust, light as fleece,
And the solemn moon shining gently through.

Prairie Night!

Below, a world of calm, save for a lone coyote,
Whose piteous wail speaks solitude and stealth;
And now and then the soft, sweet note
Of some far night bird happy in its wealth.

Prairie Night!

The black lake's ruffled deep
Reflects sky-lights that ever dance and fret
Like fairy feet. Northward the grazing cattle creep
Silent and dim in shifting silhouette.

Prairie Night!

The south wind sighs. And from the shadowy west
Shines faint some cabin's solitary light.
Its white rays lull the senses into rest.
Amid a beauty fathomless—Prairie Night.

Lethbridge, Canada

Frank C. Steele