



Type: General Conference

Untitled Talk (4 April 1921)

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

Source: *The Ninety-First Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Published: Salt Lake City; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,
1921

Page(s): 118-124

Abstract: God the Eternal Father and his son Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith in a vision. The Book of Mormon, a new volume of scripture, was revealed. Three Witnesses testified that an angel showed them the original plates.

live.' 'Where have you been? Haven't you attended our meetings before?' 'No, this is the first time I have ever attended a "Mormon" meeting since I lived in your community.'" The necessity of preaching the gospel here at home became apparent to the officers of the wards and the stakes of Zion, and now this movement of preaching the word to all of our neighbors and of giving them a chance to know of the divine calling of the Prophet Joseph and the result of his labors, and the doctrines that we believe in, will reach these people who live in our communities, who have not known it heretofore. And this I believe is a step in the right direction, and is going to result in very much good, and many people will be won to a knowledge of the truth without cost or without very much sacrifice of time and means. A soul here in Zion is just as precious as a soul that is saved abroad in the nations of the earth, where it takes many hours and days and weeks of time and considerable expenditure of money to convert each one. The principles of the gospel are just as acceptable to those who are honest in heart, who live in our midst, as those who live far away, and the elders seem delighted with the work that they are engaged in, and seem intent upon carrying the principles of the gospel to their neighbors, evincing, more than ever before, that they have accepted of those two great commandments given unto them: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; and thy neighbor as thyself." May this be our prompting sentiment continually, that we seek the welfare of others, that we seek to serve one another, that we seek to do good to our fellow men and to win those who do not know the truth, to a knowledge of the same, at any sacrifice that we are called to make, devoting our time and our best energies to the spread of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may stand approved and acquitted all the day long, and be acceptable to him, that we may have the spirit of the gospel within us continually, and the knowledge of its great truths burning within our hearts, desiring only to give these evidences to others that they may profit by them. I pray that we may be faithful to this end, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Ralph Jensen, of Heber, and David Cook, of Syracuse, sang a duet.

ELDER BRIGHAM H. ROBERTS

(Of the First Council of Seventy.)

Elder Orson F. Whitney, in the course of his impressive remarks yesterday afternoon, very solemnly declared, referring to our faith, our Church, and all that we believe and all that we are doing—"This is the work of the Lord." Now, is it? I wonder sometimes when we

say those things, and when we listen to them, if we really gather into our consciousness all that that means; or whether, in many instances at least, it takes on the nature of a mere form of speech, and we fail to realize all that is involved in a declaration of that kind. I never arose before a congregation, perhaps, where I felt less disposed to undertake the task of speaking to the people than I do here and now, this afternoon. After Brother Young, of the First Council, was called to address you, and the likelihood of President Grant continuing to call upon the members of the First Council of Seventy to address you in the order of their standing, made it likely that I might be the next called upon, I have been able to think of nothing else but just this declaration that was made by Elder Whitney, and which in some form or other, has been expressed, I think, by every speaker in this conference; and since this is the only idea present in my mind just now, I propose to work upon that for the few minutes that I am to speak to you.

And now the question: Is this work we are engaged in the work of the Lord? And if it is, then just what is involved in that statement? Why, this is involved in it, to get over the grounds very hurriedly, and touching only the high points in relation to things. If this statement of our brethren, made in various forms, is true, then God the eternal Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, and of worlds and world systems, through Jesus Christ his Son—together with his Son Jesus Christ—appeared unto a mortal man, unto a young man, Joseph Smith, and the Father introduced to him Jesus the Christ, He who was taken by cruel hands and crucified, as the scriptures say, for the sins of the world; and as he himself declared over here on the American continent, by his own mouth, that He was the Redeemer, and had been slain for the sins of the world. These two heavenly personages appeared unto this young man and proclaimed what they alone were competent to proclaim, that all the religions of the world were untrue, that men were teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, that they had forms of godliness, but denied the power thereof, and for him to follow after none of these, but giving him a promise that if he was faithful he would be chosen as an instrument in the hands of God for re-establishing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and restoring the Church of Christ again in the earth. Now, if this work that you and I are connected with is indeed the truth, then that splendid but awful vision and announcement is a reality.

Next it is declared, as a truth, that a new volume of scripture was revealed—a book making known the history of nations that flourished in past ages upon the American continents, the ruins of whose civilization we are more or less acquainted with through its surviving monuments in various parts of America. It purports to be a record of the hand-dealings of God with millions of people who lived and died upon these western continents, among whom God raised up in-

spired men to teach and instruct them in righteousness; to tell them also of the plan of life and salvation devised from before the foundation of the world. These prophets held divine authority to teach the plan of life and salvation. Also in the Book of Mormon is an account of the most splendid vision that is of record, on the appearing of the resurrected Christ to man. He appeared to the survivors of the awful cataclysms and earthquakes and tempests and destructive storms that passed over these lands of America during the crucifixion and the entombment of the Christ, and proclaimed himself to be the life and light of the world and the savior of men. If what we say in our general testimony be true, then this volume of scripture, containing the testimony for God of sleeping nations, is a verity.

In connection with the Prophet Joseph Smith, three other men received divine testimony of the verity of that work; for three men, namely Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris, testified that an angel from heaven came down into their presence and showed to them the original plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. In their presence he turned over the leaves of this ancient record and they curiously observed the engraving and saw that it was of fine workmanship. This angel declared unto them that the book had been translated by the gift and power of God, and was true; while the very voice of God, Creator of heaven and earth, the sustaining power of all worlds, who holds them in exact balance, and has the universe under the control of his almighty will—He commanded them to testify of the truth of this record. If our testimony that the work in which we are engaged is the work of God is true, then the Book of Mormon is true, and all that is in it is true.

When the young men, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, were engaged in the work of translating the Book of Mormon, the question of baptism came up in their minds, its purpose, its form, what was accomplished through it. That question they referred through prayer, to the Lord. Then John, the Baptist, the one above all others who would know all about baptism and who would be a perfect instructor of that ordinance and doctrine, he whose hands held the body of the Christ, the Son of God, when he buried him in the waters of baptism—he came and gave instructions on this important subject, and directed these men to baptize each other; and conferred upon them the authority to preach repentance and baptize others. Again, if our testimony to this work is true, then Peter and James and John, who seem to have constituted an inner circle within the college of the Apostles in the days of the Christ, who were with the Christ on several special occasions and who seemed to receive special attention from him and privileges from the Christ—these three men, to one of whom the Christ had said: “I give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven”—these three apostles came and conferred the Priesthood after the order of the Son of God, upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

That is a verity if our testimony is true; and being true what an important thing it is! Inspired and instructed by the commandments of God, these men, now holding the holy apostleship, proceeded to organize once more the very Church of Jesus Christ upon the earth by divine appointment and under divine authority.

Subsequently, when the fulness of times for such things had come, then Moses, Elias and Elijah appeared in the Kirtland Temple and bestowed upon these men the keys of authority and power they held while they were on the earth. Moses restored the keys for the gathering of the children of Israel; Elias, perhaps the patriarchal order, together with the keys or authority that unlocked the knowledge that was to link together the families of men in all nations, and that the Lord shall at the last combine into one family all the children of men. Elijah restored those keys of authority that shall turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, and doubtless the hearts of the fathers to the children. All of these things, and each one of them, are true, if our general testimony is true. The renewal of the promises and the hopes and assurances of the resurrection from the dead included in the work we call the work of God, is also true. Our hopes in Christ Jesus our Lord are not limited to our hopes and visions of things in this our mortal life. We have hope anchors within the vail that hold. The vail is rent to our vision and we see a race redeemed and raised from the dead, for as in Adam all died, so in and through the Christ shall all be made alive. And the race shall be united—bound together in the golden chains of God's love and human love. The same unity that abounds and holds in the government of the universe, will obtain as to the race of men. A unity akin to that which unites in one the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Now, when we say that this Gospel, Church and priesthood of ours is the work of the Lord, that this is the truth, this is what we mean: All these things that I have enumerated, severally and collectively, are true. Being true, how splendid, how glorious all this is! What strength; what power; what faith; what hope; what unity; what benevolence; what love, ought to and will and does abound with a people whose faith is founded upon these great truths that are involved in our faith and in our Church! The world is beginning to take note of the effect of a people having such a faith as this, as it begins to be manifested in the lives of the Latter-day Saints; and the world is going to take more note and yet more note of this as the years pass. The little "all hails," now given to the successful system of the religion that is fostered and advanced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is insignificant in comparison with that greater "all hail," that shall yet come to the work of God of which we testify.

For a moment let me call your attention to how this work has been built up by witnesses for God. When the Lord would commence this great dispensation of the fulness of times, a dispensation

in which all other previous dispensations will come pouring into, as streams find their way to the ocean—when he would begin this great work of establishing faith in the world, he began by creating a witness for himself, one who could testify that he had seen, that he had heard, that he had received instructions from the very lips of the resurrected Son of God, and that in the presence of the Father—God raised up one who could go among men and testify that he had seen and heard and had been instructed by the God of the whole universe. God raised up that witness to himself, and though he was young and inexperienced, and though persecuted for his testimony, reviled and mocked, men could not move by one hair's breadth that witness for God from the truths that he had proclaimed. Unpalatable as it was to have to say to the inhabitants of the earth that they were all wrong, he did it, though it tested even his strength. He was a good and true witness.

Then when the Book of Mormon was brought forth, the Lord found and equipped with knowledge the three men whom he would have testify to the truth of the book; and these witnesses testified and were true to their testimonies. No matter what else happened to them, how foolish they may have been, or how stubborn they were as to other matters, they remained true to the thing that God had called them to be witnesses of. They were good witnesses and I do not know but what something of strength has been added to the weight of their testimony by reason of the experiences through which they passed, for in good report and evil report, in the Church and outside of it, they remained true and steadfast to that testimony which, from the nature of it, I cannot conceive how it could be possible for men to dare to depart from, and they not depart from it. Well, these three witnesses were commissioned to go and find twelve other witnesses, special witnesses to these great truths that God is unfolding in the dispensation of the fulness of times; and they found the twelve witnesses who became the twelve apostles of the Church, especial witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world, holding the keys of the ministry of the Church in foreign nations—in all the world; so that when the door of the Gospel is to be opened to any nation, one or more of these men holding these keys of authority and power, go to these nations and open the door of the Gospel formally, for the proclamation of the truth. There is a long list of such openings of doors of the Gospel to various nations, and in each case it has been done by one of these men holding this divine commission and authority. But you begin to see how the work is built up by witnesses. It will readily be seen how twelve men are not equal to the task of making proclamation of the Gospel in all the world; and so assistants are provided. Men are gathered into quorums of seventy, and each quorum is presided over by a council of seven men, a different presidency from any of the other quorums of the Church, and doubtless for the reason that these quorums need to be well nigh indestructible at the

head, so that several of them may be called away and go upon missions for some length of time and yet not disrupt the organization. Well, these men are called to be especial witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ in all the world, to testify of Christ as well as the twelve special witnesses, or apostles. They are to testify of his divinity, that he is indeed the very Son of God, chosen as the Redeemer of the world, in whose name only may the children of men hope for salvation; also they are to testify of the resurrection and the eternal life of man through Jesus Christ—that eternal life which, we are told, God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. Well, these men, the twelve and the seventy, are chosen to be witnesses of these things which God is unfolding in the world. So, indeed, are we all witnesses—all have the right to have the witness of God's spirit to their own souls that all this mass and volume of truth is true, is the word of God; so that in a way all the Saints may receive the witness of these things, and stand up before each other and the world and say as Elder Whitney and the rest have said here, that this work is God's work.

Now, I happen to be one of the Seventy, one chosen to be officially a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ; and having reviewed all these developments of the work of the Lord, involving as it does this blessed thing to have our sins forgiven, and oh how much that means! It has been my fortune, good or ill, to come in contact with men whom I have seen laboring under a very agony of mental and spiritual distress because of their sins. I have seen them break down and cry out in their agony that they would be willing to give a right arm if only such, and such things as they had done could be undone. They would gladly give their lives if their hands could only be washed clean of the crimson stain of human life. I have seen men under the stress of agony until I have, in part at least, been led to appreciate how blessed the boon is that we may have forgiveness of sins. One other of the great gifts, and one of the greatest mercies of God, is to receive under the divine authority established here by the revelations of God, and existent in the priesthood, the right to be baptized of the Spirit that a baptism takes a poor human life up into union with the Spirit life of God. Who shall be able to tell how great that blessing is, to have God's strength become available to man as strength; his wisdom for guidance to become man's wisdom; God's strength to resist evil, his power to persist in good is given to man. What a boon it is to have one's spirit united with the Spirit of God by which we become spiritually alive, and restored to that blest state that men enjoyed before that thing we call the "fall" had happened. Now, in the presence of all this, I exercise the office of my calling as one of the witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning these things. Without argument, without debate, without even an elaborate statement of the things that are true, only having brought before your vision just how large a thing it is to say that this is the work of the Lord, and depending

now upon the spirit that is within you, and by which you too know the truth, with nothing between us, standing more than heart to heart, spirit touching spirit, your spirit meeting mine, our spirits congenial to the truth and of such nature that when we hear the truth we know the truth; now, in this attitude, I solemnly declare to you that these things that make up our history, and make up the development of the Church and kingdom of God, as we know it, I say to you that each one of the great things, and above that, all of them together, are true. And I say it conscious that I am speaking where God hears and takes cognizance of things that are said, and will hold men to an accountability for what they say. I say unto you, in very deed, and out of a clear conscience, and with a consciousness of it being approved of God—I say to you, these things are true; and being true, how strong, and noble, and brave, and broad a people the Latter-day Saints ought to be!

O God, the eternal Father, in the name of thy Son Jesus, the Christ, our Redeemer, with all my heart and soul I thank thee for a knowledge of these great truths. Seal them upon our hearts. Let us, O Lord, gather unto our souls the strength and the power that come from thee; and Thine be the power and the glory forever and ever, worlds without end. Amen.

PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

CONCERNING THE JEWS.

Some of you may be familiar with the agitation that is going on at the present time, in the publications, against the Jewish people. There should be no ill-will, and I am sure there is none, in the heart of any true Latter-day Saint, toward the Jewish people. By the authority of the Holy Priesthood of God, that has again been restored to the earth, and by the ministration, under the direction of the Prophet of God, Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ have been to the Holy Land and have dedicated that country for the return of the Jews; and we believe that in the due time of the Lord they shall be in the favor of God again. And let no Latter-day Saint be guilty of taking any part in any crusade against these people. I believe in no other part of the world is there as good a feeling in the hearts of mankind towards the Jewish people as among the Latter-day Saints.

The congregation sang, "Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation."

Benediction was pronounced by Elder William L. Jones, President of the Moapa stake of Zion.

Conference adjourned until 10 a. m. Tuesday, April 5, 1921.