

Law of Celestial Marriage—The Resurrection and Judgment—Extent of the Mission of the Savior

Discourse by Elder Joseph F. Smith, delivered at the Funeral Services Over the Remains of Elder William Clayton, Held in the 17th Ward Meetinghouse, Salt Lake City, Dec. 7th, 1879.

By request of President John Taylor, I arise to make a few remarks. I deeply and sincerely sympathize with the family, the wives and children of the deceased, Bro. William Clayton, who remain to mourn the loss of the society of their husband and father for a little season. And yet, when we consider all the circumstances, we may conclude that we have not very great cause to mourn. For when a man has lived to a good old age, worn out as it were through toil, passes away, we can realize at least that he has accomplished his mission, that he has performed his work on this earth, and is ready to return to the father from whence he came; behind the veil.

Brother Clayton had reached a ripe age, after laboring unceasingly among his brethren from his first connection with the Church.

He has had a long and varied experience among this people. He was a friend and companion of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and it was to his pen to a very great extent that we are indebted for the history of the Church—that is, the history of the Prophet Joseph more particularly, during his acquaintance with him and the time he acted for him as his private secretary, in the days of Nauvoo. We have the journals which he kept during that time, in the Historian's Office, from which—in connection with those of Elders Willard Richards and Wilford Woodruff and the *Times and Seasons*, a publication of the Church at that time—we have obtained the history of the Church during that period. It was his pen that wrote for the first time the revelation in relation to the eternity of the marriage covenant and of a plurality of wives. Although that revelation had been given to the Prophet Joseph many years before, it was not written until the 12th of July, 1843, at which time Elder William Clayton, acting as a scribe for the Prophet, wrote it from his dictation.

I am happy to say that he has left on record a statement in the shape of an affidavit, prepared by himself, in relation to this important subject, for it is a subject that is of the most vital importance, not only to the Latter-day Saints, but to the whole world; for without the knowledge contained in that revelation, we never could consummate the object of our mission to this earth, we never could fulfill the purposes of God in this estate.

I have this paper in my possession, and have had for a number of months past. In fact, it was written at my request, and then given into my care, and I have preserved it with a view, when thought proper, to have it published. And as it is a sermon of itself, it would perhaps be more interesting than anything I could say on the present occasion, and therefore, with President Taylor's permission, I will read it to the congregation.

[The affidavit was then read by Elder Smith.]

He then continued:

As I before said, I felt to read this document because of the instruction it would afford, and for the further object of showing that although "he is dead, he yet speaketh." For this testimony of Brother Clayton will stand forever, though his body molders into dust. And I am, and so was the deceased when living, at the defiance of the world to dispute those statements. They are made from personal knowledge derived from personal associations with the Prophet Joseph Smith himself, not with a view to gain notoriety, but rather to leave behind him his testimony with regard to this important principle. He has done so. And as he has here stated, as having come from the mouth of the Prophet, this doctrine of eternal union of husband and wife, and of plural marriage, is one of the most important doctrines ever revealed to man in any age of the world. Without it man would come to a full stop, without it we never could be exalted to associate with and become gods, neither could we attain to the power of eternal increase, or the blessings pronounced upon Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the fathers of the faithful.

There are but a few witnesses now living in relation to the coming forth of this revelation; there never were many that were intimately acquainted with the prophet and his teaching upon this subject. I look around me and see a

number of persons in this assembly whose hair has grown grey in the service of God, and who had an intimate acquaintance with our martyred prophet; but few, if any of them, were so closely identified with him in this matter as Brother Clayton.

There are, however, enough witnesses to these principles to establish them upon the earth in such a manner that they never can be forgotten or stamped out. For they will live; they are destined to live, and also to grow and spread abroad upon the face of the earth, to be received and accepted and adopted by all the virtuous, by all the pure in heart, by all who love the truth, and seek to serve Him and keep His commandments; they are bound to prevail, because they are true principles.

Now we are called upon to pay our last respects to Brother Clayton. His spirit has taken its flight; it has gone to the Father from whence it came, as is taught in the Book of Mormon. When the spirit leaves the body, it returns, says the prophet, immediately to God, to be assigned to its place, either to associate with the good and the noble ones who have lived in the Paradise of God, or to be confined in the "prison" house to await the resurrection of the body from the grave. Therefore we know that Brother Clayton has gone to God, gone to receive the partial judgment of the Almighty, which pertains to the period intervening between the death of the body and the resurrection of the body, or the separation of the spirit from the body, and their uniting together again. This judgment is passed upon the spirit alone. But there will come a time which will be after the resurrection, when the body and spirit shall be reunited, when the final judgment will be passed on every man. This is in accordance with the vision of the Apostle John the Revelator.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

That is the final judgment, which we will all receive after we have performed this our earthly mission.

The Savior did not finish his work when he expired on the cross, when he cried out, "It is finished." He, in using those words, had no reference to his great mission to the earth, but merely to the agonies which he suffered. The Christian world I know say he alluded to the great work of redemption. This, however, is a great mistake, and is indicative of the extent of their knowledge of the plan of life and salvation. I say he referred merely to the agonies of death, and the sufferings He felt for the wickedness of men who would go so far as to crucify their Redeemer. It was this feeling, and this alone, that prompted him to cry out in the agony of His soul, "It is finished," and then He expired.

But his work was not completed; it was in fact only begun. If he had stopped here instead of his being the Savior of the world, he, as well as all mankind, would have perished irredeemably, never to have come forth out of the grave; for it was designed from the beginning that he should be the firstfruits of them that slept; it was part of the great plan that he should burst the bands of death and gain the victory over the grave. If therefore his mission had ceased when he gave up the ghost, the world would have slumbered in the dust in interminable death, never to have risen to live again. It was but a small part of the mission of the Savior that was performed when he suffered death; it was indeed the lesser part; the greater had yet to be done. It was in his resurrection from the tomb, in his coming forth from death unto life, in uniting again the spirit and the body that we might become a living soul; and when this was done, then he was prepared to return to the Father. And all this was in strict accordance with the great plan of salvation. For even Christ himself, though without sin, was required to observe the outward ordinance of baptism, in order to fulfill all righteousness. So after his resurrection from the dead he could return to the Father, there to receive the welcome plaudit, "Well done, you have done your work, you have accomplished your mission; you have wrought out salvation for all the children of Adam; you have redeemed all men from the grave; and through their obedience to the ordinances of the Gospel which you have established, they can also be redeemed

from the spiritual death, again to be brought back into our presence, to partake of glory, exaltation and eternal life with us." And so it will be when we come forth out of the grave, when the trump shall sound, and these our bodies shall rise and our spirits shall enter into them again, and they shall become a living soul no more to be dissolved or separated, but to become inseparable, immortal, eternal.

Then we shall stand before the bar of God to be judged. So says the Bible, so says the Book of Mormon, and so say the revelations which have come direct to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And then those that have not been subject and obedient to the celestial law will not be quickened by the celestial glory. And those that have not been subject and obedient to the terrestrial law will not be quickened by the terrestrial glory. And those that have not been subject and obedient to the telestial law, will not be quickened by a telestial glory; but they will have a kingdom without glory. While the sons of perdition, men who had once been in possession of the light and truth, but who turned away from it and deny the Lord, putting him to an open shame, as did the Jews when they crucified him and said, "Let his blood be upon us and upon our children;" men who consent, against light and knowledge, to the shedding of innocent blood, it will be said unto them, "Depart ye cursed, I never knew you; depart into the second death, even banishment from the presence of God forever and ever, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, from whence there is no redemption, neither in time nor in eternity." Herein is the difference between the second and the first death, herein man became spiritually dead; for from the first death he may be redeemed by the blood of Christ through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel, but from the second there is no redemption at all.

We read in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, that the devil tempted Adam and he partook of the forbidden fruit, and transgressed the commandment, wherein he became subject to the will of the devil because he yielded unto temptation, and because of this transgression he became spiritually dead, which is the first death "even that same death which is the last death, which is spiritual, which shall be pronounced upon the wicked when I shall say: Depart ye cursed!"—*Book of Doc. and Cov.*, p. 147.

But who will receive such punishment? Only those that deserve it, those that commit the unpardonable sin.

Then there is the banishment of the transgressor (not the sons of perdition), into the prison house, a place of punishment, with no exaltation, no increase, no dominion, no power, whose inhabitants after their redemption may become servants of them that have obeyed the laws of God and kept the faith. That will be the punishment of such as reject the truth, but sin not unto death.

But as touching the terrestrial kingdom, as the stars differ from each other in luster, so those who enter into the telestial kingdom differ in glory.

"Well, now, how is it with Brother Clayton? He was not without faults in the flesh?" But what were they? Were they such as partook of a deadly character? Did he ever deny the Lord? Did he ever deny the Prophet Joseph, or did he deny the truth or prove unfaithful to his covenants or to his brethren? No, never. I can in all truthfulness before God and man bear that testimony of our departed brother, for I have known him from my youth. Yet, he was not without his failings? But then, they were of that nature that injured nobody perhaps except himself and his own family. But notwithstanding his unflinching integrity, and his long life of fidelity and usefulness, let me say to you, that for his faults, however trivial, or important, he must answer. But he will be able to pay his debt and to answer for his failings, and he will come forth and all that has been pronounced upon his head by Joseph Smith and by the Apostles, will be confirmed upon him through all eternity; and there is no power on the earth or in hell that can deprive him of them. For as it is said—and, indeed, I need not refer you to the revelation on celestial marriage; but will quote from the words of Christ, as given in the New Testament. "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men, * * * neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Our departed friend and brother whose remains are now before us, has not sinned unto death. I would not have it understood for a moment, that I or any of the Elders attend funerals to smother over the weaknesses of the departed dead, trying to make it appear that they were without faults, and therefore will not have to answer for any. We know that every man will be judged according to the deeds done in the body; and whether our sin be against our own peace and happiness alone or whether it

affects that of others, as the Lord lives we will have to make satisfaction or atonement; God requires it, and it is according to his providences, and we cannot escape it. We must comply with the provisions of the law, which Brother Clayton in my belief, is abundantly able to do. And when this shall have been done, he will come forth to receive his crown, his glory, dominion and kingdom, and the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which have been pronounced upon his head.

Then let me say to the family of our deceased brother, Follow in the footsteps of your husband and father, excepting wherein he may have manifested the weaknesses of the flesh; imitate his staunch integrity to the cause of Zion, and his fidelity to his brethren; be true as he was true, be firm as he was firm, never flinching, never swerving from the truth as God has revealed it to us; and I will promise you, in the name of the Lord, that you will rise, to meet your husband and father, in the morning of the first resurrection, clothed with glory, immortality and eternal lives. Which may God grant in the name of Jesus. Amen.