

Difference Between the Saints and the Ancient Apostles and Disciples—The Quorums of the Priesthood Will Continue to Go Forward—The Saints Are Calm and Undisturbed

Discourse by Elder Erastus Snow, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, September 9, 1877.

While Elder Richards was addressing us, a certain Scripture presented itself somewhat forcibly to my mind, that I will call attention to, as an illustration of the difference existing between us at the present time, and the condition, feelings and spirit of the Apostles and disciples of Christ at the time of His crucifixion.

The students of the Bible are aware how the feelings and faith of the disciples anciently centered in Christ, with the expectation that he was at that time to restore Israel to the possession of their promised inheritances, and establish himself upon the Throne of David forever, and that the kingdom which he came to establish, was not only to be spiritual but also temporal in its character. And notwithstanding the many plain sayings of the Savior, pointing at his death and his resurrection, and the work He came to perform for the redemption of man, there seemed to be a veil over their hearts that they comprehended it only in part. When He was taken and crucified, that veil still covered their minds. Notwithstanding that on the morning of His resurrection, the holy women reported to His disciples that they had seen Him and that He was verily risen, they could not seem to sense it. When two of their number traveled out into the country the same day, Jesus overtook them, and they knew him not, and they related to Him what had happened, adding that they had expected that He was the one who should have redeemed Israel. Then He began to expound unto them the Scriptures, and show unto them that it was necessary for Christ thus to suffer, to fulfill the words of the Prophets. Yet even these two, after hearing Him and His explanation of the Scriptures, returned and reported to the rest of the disciples what they had seen and heard, and even these could not dispel the doubts from the hearts of the disciples or take off the veil from their minds. Still they hesitated; still the vision of their minds was not fully open to comprehend the true nature and character of His mission and their own true calling. Finally, after a day or two, and the depth of their grief and mourning began to subside a little, Peter says to his brethren: I propose to go a fishing. John says, I go with you; and so one after another they who had followed the occupation of fishermen before they were called to be Apostles, concluded they would turn again to their former occupation and go fishing. They tried it, but the Lord did not bless them in their labors. They toiled all night, but the fish would not come, and they caught nothing. In the morning a voice called to them from the seaside, saying, "Children have ye any meat," and they answered Him, "none." Now, said He, "cast your net over on the other side of the ship." They cast their net on the other side of the ship, straightway, and their net was full of fish, so much so that they could not bring it into the ship, and they were under the necessity of rowing to shore and drawing the net after them. But about this time, a thought penetrated Peter's heart that this was very much like the many deeds of Jesus; this was like one of Jesus' miracles, and straightway he cast a look toward the shore and exclaimed to his brethren, "Truly it is the Lord." Then his faith and hope revived, and such joy filled his bosom that the impetuosity of his nature led him to leave the ship; he could not wait its progress to the shore but plunged into the sea, to meet his Lord. You remember what followed; Jesus knew they were hungry, and had breakfast prepared for them; he did not wait for their seine of fish to be brought ashore and cooked, but when they arrived he had it cooked, and the fish ready, and he invited them to sit down to breakfast with him. No one durst ask him who he was for by this time, God had opened their eyes and they knew him. You remember the peaceful yet keen rebuke administered to Peter on the occasion, because he had forsaken the injunctions that he had previously received, and the commandment that had been given unto him, and turned his attention again to his fishing. After they had filled themselves with the fish and cakes, Jesus asked him: "Simon Peter, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" pointing to his fish. "Yes, Lord, thou knowest I love thee." "Then feed my lambs." Again the Lord says, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "Yes, Lord, thou knowest I love thee." "Then feed my sheep." Again, the third time, Jesus asked, "Simon Peter, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter was grieved because the Lord asked the same question with renewed earnestness the third time, as if he doubted his assurance, and said, "Yes, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest I love Thee." Jesus saith unto him, "Feed my sheep. Now you have tried your hand at fishing, Peter, and you see that when the Lord was not with you, you caught nothing. I called you from your fishing in the beginning, and said to you henceforth to leave your

nets, and I would make you fishers of men.” This reproof sufficed Peter the rest of his life. We have no account of his ever wishing to go fishing again, at least not to neglect the flock of Christ.

In the epistle which Peter wrote to his brethren in the latter end of his life, he refers very delicately to that period of his career, when as he says, in his own words, “We buried our hope with Christ, but thanks be unto God that it is renewed again by the resurrection of our Lord from the dead.” The hope they had cherished seemed to have been lost when they buried him, but it was renewed again unto them by the resurrection of the Lord from the dead, and by his ministrations among them during a period of forty days after his resurrection, showing himself repeatedly and giving them instruction, telling them, at the same time, “not until I have departed from you will the Holy Ghost come upon you and endow you with power from on high, revealing all things unto you which the Father hath prepared; but if I go away the Comforter will come, and he will guide you into all truth and show you things to come.

It is interesting to reflect upon and contemplate the influences and surroundings of the early disciples and the manner in which the Father performed his works in their midst and after the resurrection of the Savior; how their eyes were opened to see and comprehend the true nature and character of his mission upon the earth; the true nature of his kingdom, and the work which he was sent to perform, in which they were his helpers and fellow workers; called and ordained to the holy Apostleship, to be his witnesses in all the earth, to bear witness of him and baptize those who believed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things which he had commanded them. It seemed wise in the providences of God to conceal it, measurably, from their minds until after his resurrection from the dead. His last entrance into Jerusalem, when he rode upon the foal of an ass, and the believers spread their garments and palm branches in his pathway, for him to ride upon in token of the great esteem and respect they cherished for him, and their assurance that he had come in the name of the Lord, to establish the Throne of David and redeem Israel from the oppression of the Gentiles and the bondage that was upon their necks as a people; and they cried, “Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord,” while some of the overrighteous ones or those who thought they were making too much ado about him were rather inclined to rebuke them and asked Jesus to rebuke them and tell them to be quiet. His answer was, “If these should hold their peace the very stones will cry out,” as much as to say, it is the Father in them that is crying. It was the promptings and inspiration of the Almighty that were moving the hearts of the people to call the attention of all Judea and Jerusalem, and all the people around about, that their eyes might see and their ears might hear and all the people know him who cometh in the name of the Lord, riding upon the foal of an ass, according to the predictions of the ancient Prophets. He would not rebuke them, but let the spirit flow; let their mouths utter praise; let them show their respect; let them show their respect, and do honor to him whom the Father had sent. And all this that when he should suffer, and the curtain should drop, and he should be executed, the Lord should cause the sun to be darkened, and the earth to quake, and the veil of the Temple to rend, that all Israel might have a testimony and an assurance that the Son of God was suffering.

Those who are familiar with the early history of the Latter-day Saints, with the life, career and death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, with the scenes that surrounded the people at that time, and the mighty strides that he seemed to take in the last years of his life; the force with which he seemed to push forward the work that was upon him, and the feeling that hurried him forward to confer upon the Apostles and a few others the keys of the Priesthood and the Holy Endowments, which God had revealed unto him, and his efforts to set in order all things pertaining to the Priesthood; also his communication on the powers and policy of the Government of the United States, and the purposes of God concerning them, putting his name before the people as a candidate for the Presidency of the United States, and the recommendations which he made to save them from the civil war that has since overtaken them, the results of the slavery question, that was agitating the nation, all these great and important subjects were kept prominently before the people, and while the Elders and people of Israel labored diligently to carry out his teachings and execute his plans and designs, he stepped behind the veil almost as suddenly and unexpectedly, to the people, as did Jesus when he was crucified. I repeat, it was almost as sudden and unexpected to the vast body of this people as the crucifixion of Jesus was to his disciples, who were looking for him to be placed upon the throne of his father David, to rule and reign over the House of Israel.

The Apostles of this dispensation did not, however, leave the work of the ministry to which they had been called, and go a fishing; but there were some in Israel who seemed to have buried their hope with the Prophet Joseph. And it has been said of some that they died with him; and though they continued to live years after, yet their faith and hope seemed to have died with him. Not so with President Brigham Young, and the Apostles that were with him. They were mostly abroad ministering in their calling, but two or three of them were at home. Among the latter number was Elder John Taylor, who is with us today, as you who are familiar with the early history of those times are aware. He and Elder Willard Richards were with the Prophet Joseph and Hyrum, in person, when they were assassinated, and John Taylor received four balls. The rest of the Twelve were abroad attending to their ministry, holding Conferences in various parts of the country, nor did they leave those labors and turn again to their former occupations as did Peter and his brethren. A profound sensation was produced among all the Latter-day Saints throughout the world, and among their enemies, many of whom loudly condemned the shocking manner in which their death was accomplished. Time will not permit, nor does it appear to me a suitable time to dwell upon it; but great was the impression produced throughout the land. Deep was the sorrow and mourning, and the query arose in the minds of many, what shall be the result of these things? Especially among that class whose hopes seemed to have been buried with him, whose faith seemed to have been centered in him; who did not look beyond him.

But the response of the Spirit to those whose faith centered in God was this: The Prophet Joseph has organized the quorums, has set in order the Priesthood, and conferred the keys and powers thereof upon his brethren, and said to the Twelve Apostles, "Upon your shoulders shall rest the burden of this kingdom, to bear it off in all the world. The Lord is going to let me rest." His words were before the people, and in the hearts of those who were living and walking in the light of the Holy Ghost, whose faith reached beyond the Prophet Joseph, and looked to the source from whence he received his power and influence.

We have often heard our late President, Brigham Young, who was President of the Twelve Apostles by seniority, and who had been placed there by the voice of his brethren, to preside over his quorum, which had also been confirmed by the Lord, say that he was attending a Conference in Petersboro, New Hampshire, when he heard of the Prophet's death. The query arose in his mind: Where now rests those keys of the holy Priesthood which the Prophet Joseph received and revealed unto us? Where now on this side of the veil are those keys deposited? The answer came to him by the Holy Spirit resting upon him with a power and influence and peaceful assurance which caused him to bring his hand to his thigh with the utterance, "They are here. They are here!" The voice of his brethren responded, and the echo reverberated not only among the Apostles, but, among the Seventies, the High Priests, the Elders, Bishops, Teachers, Deacons, and all the people. They are here, with brother Brigham, with his brethren the Apostles, who have been called and charged by the Prophet Joseph with the duties and responsibilities of bearing off this kingdom and building it up, and setting in order and regulating the affairs thereof in all the world. This revelation of the Spirit to our beloved President, Brigham Young, on that occasion, and which also rested upon his brethren, and was diffused among all the people and responded to with such universal voice, sentiment and feelings, was not a fresh call, a new revelation, but it was bringing to their minds one previously given, refreshing their minds and understanding in the word of the Lord that had been spoken unto them through the Prophet Joseph himself, making more fully and clearly than ever, those words that had been previously spoken to them, the charge that he gave to them to bear off the work which now rested upon their shoulders. From that day until the present time has this revelation been clear and prominent before the people, and in their hearts, and in the mouth of President Brigham Young. How often has he said, "Joseph is still my leader; he is still my President; he still bears the keys before me. I am still following after him to carry out his counsel, to accomplish the work of which he laid the foundation, under God. I am still as he appointed, an Apostle to bear off this kingdom, to bear witness of the work which God by him did accomplish, and to carry it forward by the power of God and the help of my brethren and fellow laborers, and I am still an Apostle and President of the Twelve Apostles."

But the Lord signifies to me that these Quorums of the Priesthood shall go forward in their respective spheres of labor, and as one passes beyond the veil, following his file leader, the next Apostle will follow after, treading, as it were, in his footsteps, to bear off this kingdom. The work is of God and not of man, and no number of martyrdoms or death, and no amount of persecution nor slaying of the Lord's anointed, can put a stop to it. How often we have heard it proclaimed that the keys of the Apostleship, which had been committed to men on the earth, together with

all the keys of the Holy Endowments, and every blessing which the Lord has provided and promised to men in the flesh, are placed within our reach through the keys of this Priesthood, and that this Apostleship will continue upon the earth until it has accomplished that which the Lord has ordained and appointed, and until Israel shall be gathered, and the people be prepared for his second coming, and that, if one passes beyond the veil, another follows in his footsteps, and if persecution rage, and many witnesses of the Lord are slain, still he will preserve witnesses upon the earth, with the keys of that ministry and Apostleship to bear off the kingdom triumphantly, and fulfill and accomplish all that the Lord has predicted. These utterances have often been made in our hearing, within the last thirty-three years, since the death of the Prophet Joseph, and have become household words with those who have been alive to their calling and duties, and whose eyes and ears have been open to hear the word of the Lord and remember it. How calm and peaceful the spirit and feelings of Israel on this memorable occasion, when our beloved President, who has led the van for the last thirty-three years, quietly gathered up his feet and was gathered to his fathers. How different was the spirit and feelings of Israel on this occasion from the other occasion I have referred to, and from the Apostles and disciples of Jesus when He departed! It shows to our minds the education of the people, and their advancement in understanding and faith. It shows the stability of our institutions and their power over the feelings and hearts of the people. In every department of the Priesthood, in every branch of the Church, through all the Stakes of Zion, and in every department of our labor, there seems scarcely a ripple upon the smooth surface of the waters.

Last Sabbath, when a vast congregation of the people came from the east, west, north and south, and from this city and its suburbs, to pay their last respects to the honored dead, the quiet, the order, the silent and discreet feeling of resignation and peace that prevailed, should be a lesson to the Saints and a testimony to the world of the purity of faith that we have embraced, and the influence that had been exerted upon the hearts of the people by our departed leader, and his brethren who have been laboring with him. We find no confusion, no running to and fro, nobody dropping their tools or neglecting their labors, and nobody wishing to go a fishing. When we had finished the last sad rites, and completed what duties we owed to the honored dead, we found every one, on Monday morning, resuming his duties; business assumed its wonted course in every department of our public as well as our private labors. The Saints everywhere, as well as our Elders abroad, move forward in the discharge of their duties with calmness and serenity, with assurance that Brigham is still our leader. Joseph is still our Prophet, and Brigham is leader as much as he was in life, but not on this side of the veil—he has gone into another sphere, to engage in the labors of the Gospel with Joseph, Hyrum, and all the holy ones that have gone before in this dispensation, to assist them in rolling on the work of this dispensation among the dead, and prepare the way for the final consummation of all things spoken of by the Prophets, while his brethren on this side the veil tread softly and diligently after him, as it were in his footsteps, to move on the cause of Israel, and send the Gospel to the ends of the earth. What a commentary on the stability of the institutions of Zion! The power of that faith that we have received, the strength of that union, and the perfection of that organization which God has established among us, which gives us the reassurance that instead of the cause of Zion weakening, it will gain additional power and strength; and the Priesthood that remain on this side, having lost a tower of strength in him who has gone, must exert themselves and their faith, and renew their strength in the Lord, and magnify their calling, that the work of the Lord be not hindered. That this may be the feelings and determination of every one of the Apostles, Seventies, High Priests, Elders, Bishops, and Presidents in Zion, and all the people, that we may strive more diligently to magnify our calling, until we meet again those who have gone behind the veil, where already there seems to be almost a majority of the early Apostles and first Elders of the Church, preaching the Gospel and preparing the hearts of those that receive it, while we who remain continue our labors in building the Temples of the Lord, and entering therein and officiating in the baptisms, endowments, and ordinances, and sealing blessings upon our dead, that the promises of God may be fulfilled which he has made, namely, that in this dispensation of the fullness of times He would gather in one all things that are in Christ Jesus, which are on the earth and which are in heaven, which may God grant and help us to accomplish, through Jesus. Amen.