

Order—Spiritual Gifts—Temples—The New Jerusalem

Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, April 9, 1871.

Brethren, sisters, and strangers, I wish to address you for a few moments this forenoon, and to speak upon those things that may be put into my mind. We, all of us, believe that our God is a God of order, that all things that are conducted by him are conducted in the most perfect order, according to law. Hence it is written somewhere in the New Testament, I think in the 14th chapter of Paul's 1st epistle to the Corinthians that: "My house is a house of order and not a house of confusion." What we mean by this is, that everything pertaining to the salvation of men, which is acceptable in the sight of heaven, must be in accordance with strict law. In other words, that the Lord designed a work among the human family according to those laws that were ordained by him from before the foundation of the world. If he desires them to be baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, he has ordained a law through and by which mankind may be made partakers of the blessing. If he is willing to extend mercy and pardon to the children of men he has ordained a law, namely, faith in his Son Jesus Christ, in the atonement that he wrought out in the ordinances and institutions of the Gospel that he established, requiring the human family to repent, and reform their lives, to put away their sins, break off from every manner of evil and enter into a covenant with him to serve him faithfully, and to manifest their repentance by obeying a certain ordinance, then comes forgiveness. That ordinance is baptism, which must be performed according to the pattern and law of heaven; it must not be varied from. Sprinkling will not do; pouring water on the head will not do; baptism administered by a man having no authority from heaven will not be accepted; it must be administered according to law, order and authority, by one who is commissioned, to whom the Lord has spoken and to whom he has given revelation and called to perform that work, then it will be acceptable, and will be acknowledged in heaven, and be recorded in the archives of eternity; and when the books are opened it will be found in those books that that man or that woman has complied with the order of God's house, given heed to the institutions and ordinances of his kingdom, and having continued to do so to the end he or she can be saved.

God has also ordained that when he bestows upon the children of men spiritual gifts that they must be received in order; they must be given according to the laws and institutions of the church, through the administration of that authority and power that he has established here on the earth. Hence, Paul, in writing to the saints in his day, said to them on a certain occasion that he greatly desired to visit certain branches of the church in order that he might impart to them some spiritual gifts. Why not receive these spiritual gifts in some other way? Why not receive these great and choice heavenly blessings according to our own will? Because God is a God of order and his house is not a house of confusion. If he desires to bestow any great, choice heavenly gift upon his servants and handmaidens he has ordained an authority and set that authority in his church, and through the administration of the ordinances that pertain to that heavenly gift they may be made partakers thereof.

God has promised in the sermon on the mount a very great blessing to the pure in heart—"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." How great is the blessing that is here pronounced! They shall see God. God is a being who is willing to reveal himself, even to his children here on the earth. If they will abide by law, give heed to the ordinances that he has ordained, and walk in consistency with the principles that are revealed, they may come up to that high privilege here, in time, that the veil will be taken away and their eyes can look on the face of the Lord, for they are pure in heart. I know it is written in other places that no man hath seen God at any time. In the book of Exodus it is written that "no man shall see my face;" and then again, the same book says that Jacob saw God face to face and talked with him. Again it is written that Moses talked with the Lord face to face as a man talks with his friend. How shall we reconcile these passages of scripture? If we take the scriptures in their true import, and according to the general tenor of their reading, they are easily reconciled. No natural man hath seen God at any time. A natural man could not behold the face of the Lord in his glory, for he could not endure it; but when a mortal man or woman here on the earth has put away the natural or carnal mind; when he or she has put away all sin and iniquity, and has complied with the laws and commandments of God, then, like Jacob of old, he or she may see God face to face, and, like Moses, talk with the Lord as one man talks with another. It is written here in this book which you and I have received as a part and portion of our rule of faith and practice, "The Book of Covenants," as follows: "Verily thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul that forsaketh his sins and

cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face, and know that I am; And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one." Again it is written in another revelation: "And inasmuch as my people shall build up a house unto me in the name of the Lord, and do not suffer any unclean thing to come into it, that it be not defiled, my glory shall rest upon it; Yea, my presence shall be there, for I will come into it, and all the pure in heart that shall come into it shall see God. But if it be defiled I will not come into it, and my glory shall not be there; for I will not come into unholy temples, etc."

I have read these sayings, in order that the Latter-day Saints may perceive that God is willing that you and I and the least of those that are called Latter-day Saints, if they will purify themselves before him and call upon his name, keep his commandments, obey his institutions, comply with the order of his house, regulating their lives and conduct by every word that proceeds forth out of his mouth—may rend the veil, and be permitted to gaze upon the face of our Redeemer and Creator. This was the privilege of the Saints of God in times of old. Paul in addressing the Saints who lived in his day writes thus:

"Ye are come unto Mount Zion, unto the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, unto God the judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant."

What high privileges and great blessings were conferred upon those former-day Saints! They had been enabled by their faith to come up before God and claim, not only those common spiritual gifts that are imparted to the church for the mutual edification of its members, but they were also permitted to rise still higher, by virtue of their faith, and gaze upon the heavenly Jerusalem, to come unto mount Zion, to the city of the living God. They could behold the face of God, the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the faces of an innumerable company of angels—the Church of the Firstborn, and mingle themselves, as it were, in their society. All these things were obtained through obedience to the laws and institutions that God had made manifest in the midst of his house.

When the Lord commanded this people to build a house in the land of Kirtland, in the early rise of this church, he gave them the pattern by vision from heaven, and commanded them to build that house according to that pattern and order; to have the architecture, not in accordance with architecture devised by men, but to have everything constructed in that house according to the heavenly pattern that he by his voice had inspired to his servants. When this was complied with did the Lord accept that house? Yes! They having complied with the order and built the house according to the pattern, the Lord condescended to grace that house with his presence. In that house the veil was taken away from the eyes of many of the servants of God and they beheld his glory. In that house the Lord Jesus Christ was seen by some of the Elders of the Church in heavenly vision standing upon the threshold of the pulpit, proclaiming himself to be Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the Great I Am, &c. And he gave keys of instruction and counsel and authority to his servants, declaring unto them that he accepted that house at their hands, and inasmuch as they had been faithful in the performance of their duty in building a temple to his name, he blessed them therein. He also proclaimed unto them that from that house his servants should go forth armed with the power of his priesthood, and proclaim the Gospel among the various nations, and that many people should come from the uttermost parts of the earth and praise the name of the Lord in Zion, and in the midst of his house. Thus did the Lord, when we fulfilled on our part, fulfil his promises on his part. So, in the latter days, when the Lord our God shall permit us to build that house of which he has spoken in the paragraph just quoted from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, it shall come to pass in that day that all who are pure in heart that enter into that house shall see God. Thus we perceive that the Lord chooses to have a house built unto his holy name, wherein he shall manifest his glory and power.

When Moses reared a tabernacle in the wilderness of the land of Egypt according to the pattern that God gave unto him did the Lord acknowledge it? He did. Did he show forth his power and glory in that house? He did. Did a cloud rest upon it by day and a pillar of flaming fire hover over it by night? Yes! It was done according to the pattern and according to the heavenly order and commandment of the Great Jehovah. So, when the servants of God in the last days shall build a house in the tops of the mountains, he will acknowledge it if they build it according to the pattern which shall be revealed from heaven, on the spot that the Lord shall designate by his own voice, and in the time and in the season, proclaimed by the Almighty. It shall come to pass in that day, also, that the Lord will show forth

his glory in that house, and the fame thereof shall go forth to the uttermost parts of the earth: all people, nations, languages and tongues, kings upon their thrones, and many nations will say, "come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us of his ways." That is, that he may inform our minds concerning the order and laws that pertain to his house and kingdom, that everything may be done by law and authority, that what is done here on the earth may be acknowledged and recorded in the heavens, for the benefit of those who believe.

I have about five minutes more. We read in the scriptures of divine truth that the Lord our God is to come to his temple in the last days, as was quoted yesterday by Elder Penrose. It is recorded in the 3rd chapter of Malachi that "the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple." This had no reference to the first coming of the Messiah, to the day when he appeared in the flesh; but it has reference to that glorious period termed the last days, when the Lord will again have a house, or a temple reared up on the earth to his holy name. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, but who shall abide the day of his coming? Who shall stand when he appears? For he is like the refiner's fire and like fuller's soap. He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver upon the sons of Levi; that they may offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord as in days of old and as in former years." The Lord intends to have a temple not only in Zion, but, according to this, in old Jerusalem; and he intends that the sons of Levi shall receive their blessings—the blessings of their priesthood that were conferred upon them in that temple; and he is determined that the ministers in that temple shall be purified as gold and silver is purified, and he is determined to sit as a refiner's fire in the midst of that temple. So it will be in the temple in Zion, for behold in the last days the Lord will rear up Zion upon the American continent, and he will also rear up Jerusalem on the eastern hemisphere. Zion on the western continent will be the place where the Lord will also purify and cleanse these two priesthoods—the priesthood of Levi and the priesthood of Melchizedek—the lower and the higher priesthood—and they will be filled with the glory of God upon Mount Zion in the Lord's house.

Let me read a few passages in the Book of Covenants. Thirty-nine years ago a revelation was given, a passage or two of which I will now read; "A revelation of Jesus Christ unto his servant Joseph Smith and six elders, as they united their hearts and lifted up their voices on high. Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand on Mount Zion, which shall be the city of the New Jerusalem. Which city shall be built, beginning at the temple lot, which is appointed by the finger of the Lord, in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, and dedicated by the hand of Joseph Smith, Jun., and others with whom the Lord was well pleased."

I now notice another prediction: "Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city of the New Jerusalem shall be built up by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation. For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord, and a cloud shall rest upon it, which cloud shall be even the glory of the Lord, which shall fill the house."

We will now read an item from the sixth paragraph: "The sons of Moses," that is, those that pertain to the two priesthoods, "the sons of Moses and the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord, which house shall be established in this generation, upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed—And the sons of Moses and of Aaron," that is, those who receive the two priesthoods, "shall be filled with the glory of the Lord upon Mount Zion in the Lord's house, whose sons are ye; and also many whom I have called and sent forth to build up my church. For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining of these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies. They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God," etc.

Here then we see a prediction, and we believe it. Yes! The Latter-day Saints have as firm faith and rely upon this promise as much as they rely upon the promise of forgiveness of sins when they comply with the first principles of the Gospel. We just as much expect that a city will be built, called Zion, in the place and on the land which has been appointed by the Lord our God, and that a temple will be reared on the spot that has been selected, and the

cornerstone of which has been laid, in the generation when this revelation was given; we just as much expect this as we expect the sun to rise in the morning and set in the evening; or as much as we expect to see the fulfillment of any of the purposes of the Lord our God, pertaining to the works of his hands. But says the objector, "thirty-nine years have passed away." What of that? The generation has not passed away; all the people that were living thirty-nine years ago have not passed away; but before they do pass away this will be fulfilled. What is the object of this Temple? The object is that the Lord may, according to the order that he has instituted, unveil his face to his servants, that those that are pure in heart and enter into that temple may be filled with the glory of God upon Mount Zion in the Lord's house; and, finally, whatever we may be called upon to do, whether it be building temples, cultivating the earth, organizing ourselves into cooperative companies to carry out the purposes and designs of Jehovah; whether we are sent abroad on missions or remain at home, it matters not, all things must be done in order, all things must be performed according to law, so that they will be acceptable in the sight of heaven, and be recorded there for the benefit of the people of God here on the earth. Why? Because God is a God of order; he is a God of law. God is that being that sways his scepter over universal nature and controls the suns and systems of suns and worlds and planets and keeps them moving in their spheres and orbits by law; and all his subjects must comply with law here on the earth, that they may be prepared to do his will on the earth as his will is done by the angelic hosts and those higher order of intelligences that reign in his own presence. Amen.