

Ordinance of Bread and Wine—Its Nature—Character of God and of Jesus—Reasons Why Sin and Death Exist—Earthly Probation Necessary for Future Glory—Danger of Apostasy

Remarks by President Brigham Young, delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, Jan. 8, 1865.

I am more and more convinced of the inability of man to receive intelligence to any great amount at any one time. Some have an understanding of what they commit to the keeping of their memories, while others commit to repeat again, and that is the end of it. Some can remember things for years that have been told them, and still not understand what was told them; while others can receive more into their understandings, and retain more in their memories, than others can, and still not be qualified to repeat that which they can remember and understand. Why I make these remarks is, because that I see around me, and feel within me, the defects which are occasioned by the weakness which is in man through the fall. I would not, however, say that a person entirely free from the effects of the fall of man could learn knowledge to any great amount at one time, though he might be able to learn more than a man would who is under the influence of the fall.

I will make a few remarks, in the first place, in regard to the ordinance of administering bread and wine, which ordinance we attend to every first day of the week. This is a very solemn ordinance. The Christian world accepts it, in preference to any other, as one of the ordinances of the house of God. With some, this ordinance is the first and the last; and with others this ordinance is not thought to be of sufficient importance to be attended to. I wish to say to the Latter-day Saints, and also to those who do not believe in the fulness of the Gospel, that this ordinance, which we are now attending to this afternoon, is, in reality, no more sacred than any other ordinance of the house of God in the eyes of Him who has instituted the same. The validity of one divine law is the same as the validity of another with our Father and God. We partake of bread and water to witness that we remember Jesus Christ, who gave his life a ransom for us, and that we are willing to keep His commandments. He has said, "Do this in remembrance of me," when He ate His last supper with His disciples; and He also said, "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." We should desire to remember Him in all sincerity, and when we partake of these emblems, do it with an eye single to His glory, and to the building up of His kingdom, also for our own perfection, salvation, and glorification therein. In like manner we should receive and obey all the ordinances of the house of God; and I hope and trust that we shall live to our profession so strictly, and so closely adhere to the commandments of the Lord, that we shall never hear the painful sound that Saints and sinners are one; this I should abhor. I pray that the Latter-day Saints will live so that God, Jesus Christ, and the angels will love them, and the devil and all his hosts will hate them. I have never yet been able to discover in all my researches in sacred history that a Gospel hater, a Jesus Christ hater, and a God hater ever spoke well of Saints, either in the former or in the latter days, but have ever sought occasion against them from the most trifling circumstances. We have an instance of this, when the disciples of Jesus, in passing through the cornfield, being hungry, began to pluck the ears of corn, and eat; the Pharisees, seeing this, said to Jesus, "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day." You may read at your leisure the answer of the Savior. This was a trick of the devil to bring evil upon Jesus and his disciples. Satan and his followers think no better of the Saints now than they did in the life time of the Savior, and I hope never to see the day when they will find favor in the eyes of the wicked. It is true, some will backslide, leave the Church of Jesus Christ, and receive the spirit of the world and the love of it, and, finally, be lost; but the great body of the Saints, I most fervently believe, will never amalgamate with Baal.

I will now say a few words relating to the subject which was presented to the people this morning. Inquiries were made by the speaker, why we have not seen God; why we are subject to sin; why we are in this fallen world? I will briefly answer these queries. If our Father and God should be disposed to walk through one of these aisles, we should not know him from one of the congregation. You would see a man, and that is all you would know about him; you would merely know Him as a stranger from some neighboring city or country. This is the character of Him whom we worship and acknowledge as our Father and God: when He is disposed to visit a house, a neighborhood, or a congregation, He does it at His pleasure; and although He may be seen by mortals in this character, yet no

man can see Him in His glory and live. When the Lord sends an angel to visit men, He gives him power and authority to appear to the people as a man, and not as an angel in his glory; for we could not endure the presence even of an angel in his glory. No mortal man has ever seen God in His glory at any time and lived. We may have seen the Lord and angels many times, and did not know it. I will be satisfied with seeing and associating with His children whom I now behold, for there is not a son or daughter of Adam and Eve before me today but what is the offspring of that God we worship. He is our Heavenly Father; He is also our God, and the Maker and upholder of all things in heaven and on earth. He sends forth His counsels and extends His providences to all living. He is the Supreme Controller of the universe. At His rebuke the sea is dried up, and the rivers become a wilderness. He measures the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meteth out heaven with a span, and comprehendeth the dust of the earth in a measure, and weigheth the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; the nations to Him are as a drop in a bucket, and He taketh up the isles as a very little thing; the hairs of our heads are numbered by Him, and not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father; and He knoweth every thought and intent of the hearts of all living, for He is everywhere present by the power of His Spirit—His minister the Holy Ghost. He is the Father of all, is above all, through all, and in you all; He knoweth all things pertaining to this earth, and He knows all things pertaining to millions of earths like this.

The Lord Jesus Christ might come among us and we would not know Him; and if he were to come in our midst and speak unto us today, we might suppose Him to be one of our returned missionaries; and if He was to make himself known unto us, some might say to Him, as it was said by one of old, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." He would simply say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" It is written of Jesus, that, besides His being the brightness of His Father's glory, He is also "the express image of his person." The knowledge of the character of the Only Begotten of the Father comes to us through the testimony, not of disinterested witnesses, but of His friends, those who were most especially and deeply interested for their own welfare, and the welfare of their brethren. We have no testimony concerning the Savior's character and works, only from those who were thus interested in His welfare and success, and in the building up of His kingdom. It has been often said, if a disinterested witness would testify that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God, many might believe his testimony; but no person could be believed, by any intelligent person, who would testify to a matter of such importance, and who would still view it as a thing in which he had no interest. But they who are interested, who know the worth of that man and understand the spirit and the power of his mission, and the character of the Being that sent and ordained him, are the proper persons to testify of the truth of his mission, and they are the most interested of any living upon the earth. So it was with those who bore witness of the Savior, and of His mission on the earth.

If Jesus should veil His glory and appear before you as a man, and witness of himself as being the image of his Father, would you believe that he was really Jesus Christ and that he told you the truth? And if you believed His words, would you not wonder exceedingly to hear that our Father and God is an organized being after the fashion of man's organization in every respect? Such, however, is the case. One of the prophets describes the Father of us all, saying, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame," etc. The prophet further says, "thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him," etc. Again, "and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him." Now, who is this Ancient of days? You may answer this question at your pleasure, I have already told the people. But the Savior would answer the question as to the appearance of the Father of us all, by saying, "Look at me, for I am the very express image of my Father." Then if the Father is precisely like his Son Jesus Christ, where is the man here in the flesh that is precisely like the Savior? We have not seen Him in person, but there are men on the earth who have seen Him in vision. As to whether the Savior has got a body or not is no question with those who possess the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, and are endowed with the Holy Priesthood; they know that he was a man in the flesh, and is now a man in the heavens; He was a man subject to sin, to temptation, and to weaknesses; but He is now a man that is above all this—a man in perfection.

And what shall we say of our Heavenly Father? He is also a man in perfection, and the father of the man Jesus Christ, and the father of our spirits; He lives far above the influence and power of sin, and holds in his hands the

destinies of all. We have not seen the person of the Father, neither have we seen that of the Son; but we have seen the children of the Father, and the brethren of the Savior, who are in every way like them in physical appearance and organization. Although mankind of the same color look alike, yet there exist expressions of the features by which one person can be distinguished from another. The human family all resemble one another in the main characteristics of humanity, and all resemble the Savior who died for us; and could we see him in the flesh, as he appeared to the ancients, we should very likely find that some men are more like him than others in feature and form, as we often see men who are more like Joseph Smith than others are. God is our Father, Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother, and we are all brethren, and of one family, and our Heavenly Father is subjecting us to sin, misery, pain, and death for the exquisite enjoyment of an exaltation. This will answer my mind for the present with regard to the character of our Father and our God, and with regard to our Savior.

The reason of our being made subject to sin and misery, pain, woe, and death, is, that we may become acquainted with the opposites of happiness and pleasure. The absence of light brings darkness, and darkness an appreciation of light; pain an appreciation of ease and comfort; and ignorance, falsehood, folly, and sin, in comparison with wisdom, knowledge, righteousness, and truth, make the latter the more desirable to mankind. Facts are made apparent to the human mind by their opposites. We find ourselves surrounded in this mortality by an almost endless combination of opposites, through which we must pass to gain experience and information to fit us for an eternal progression. Those who are enlightened by the spirit of truth, have no difficulty in seeing the propriety and the benefit to us of this state of things. Like heavenly beings, we are endowed with the power of free volition; for God has given to mankind their agency, making them amenable to him for their sins, and entitling them to blessings and rewards for the good they do, and according to their faith in him. It is the wish of our Heavenly Father to bring all his children back into his presence. The spirits of all the human family dwelt with him before they took tabernacles of flesh and became subject to the fall and to sin. He is their spiritual Father, and has sent them here to be clothed with flesh, and to be subject, with their tabernacles, to the ills that afflict fallen humanity. When they have proved themselves faithful in all things, and worthy before Him, they can then have the privilege of returning again to his presence, with their bodies, to dwell in the abodes of the blessed. If man could have been made perfect, in his double capacity of body and spirit, without passing through the ordeals of mortality, there would have been no necessity of our coming into this state of trial and suffering. Could the Lord have glorified his children in spirit, without a body like his own, he no doubt would have done so.

We read that there is nothing impossible with God. In a broad sense there is not; but in another sense there are things he never attempted and never will. He will not exalt a spirit to thrones, to immortality, and eternal lives, unless that spirit is first clothed in mortal flesh, and with it, passes through a mortal probation, and overcomes the world, the flesh, and the devil through the atonement made by Jesus Christ and the power of the Gospel. The spirit must be clothed as He is, or it never can be glorified with him. He must of necessity subject his children to the same, through a strict observance of the ordinances and rules of salvation. To attain to this glory, it is required that we love and honor his name, reverence his character and the ordinances of his house, and never speak lightly of him, of his Son Jesus Christ, or of those who bear His Priesthood; never speaking evil of dignities, who are clothed with the authority of Heaven; for to all such it will be said, "Depart from me, ye cursed," etc. I say to all, honor God and his Holy Priesthood, which he bestows upon mankind expressly for the purpose of bringing them again into his presence, with their resurrected and renewed tabernacles, for exaltation and glory.

I cannot on the present occasion say all that I would on these matters. The riches of eternity and the marrow of life are embraced in them; they are full of life to all who desire life, they will increase life to those who live, and give life to those who seem to have no life. It is as easy to understand these principles when the mind is opened by the Spirit of the Almighty, as it is to understand one of the simple lessons in the child's first reader. Here are some of the twelve apostles listening to what I have to say; they have heard me speak at length upon these doctrines, and they have been taught from time to time for years past. The speaker this morning possessed a sweet, loving spirit, and gave us a lovely discourse, but did not think of these things which have been told him time and time again. I would exhort my brethren to read the Scriptures, and seek earnestly for the Spirit of the Almighty to understand them; and this great subject, at which I have merely glanced, will appear to them in all its simplicity and grandeur. Let each man so live that he may know these things for himself, and be always ready to give a reason of the hope

within him to all who may ask it. I am trying to be a Latter-day Saint, and I think I shall conquer. I may come short in a thousand things; but I think I shall receive my reward as a faithful servant of God, which I hope to do, and I also hope you will. Let us live so that we may still add to our present stock of knowledge, and have the disposition within us to do even better than we have hitherto done; although I do not know that I could do better than I have done since I have been in this kingdom: if I were to live my life over again, I should be afraid to try it, lest I might make the matter worse instead of better. Let us live so that the oracles of truth, the words of life, and the power of God shall dwell within us constantly. You will not hold these remarks long in your memories, and although they are printed and you can read them at your leisure, yet they may lie upon the bookshelf neglected, and the mind remain barren of the true information they contain.

The whole world has gone after Lucifer; they follow the lusts of their eyes and the wicked desires of their depraved minds; they have all gone after sin, except a few, and all hell seems bent on making those few apostatize from the truth; but they cannot destroy the kingdom of God. Some few will be dazzled by the tinsel show and fair pretensions of the world, and be led away from the truth by the silken cords of the enemy of all righteousness; but they do not know the misery of the world. When they get into hell, they would be willing to be preached to, that they might get out, if they could. It would be well for all who wish to apostatize to do so, and give your room for others who want it. We are told that we must be tried in all things; there may yet remain a few things in which we have not yet been tried, and in some things we have been tried pretty well.

Who is for God and his kingdom? I can tell you truly that there are more for the kingdom of God than there are against it. This is a pleasing reflection. We have on former occasions made known to the people the state of the wicked after death; if they will not listen to the testimony of the servants of God, let them taste of the sufferings of the damned and drink of the bitter cup to the dregs, and then they will very likely call for mercy. May the pure in heart ever be enabled, through the mercy of the Lord, to shun suffering, and not be obliged to pass through the great misery that many will who have turned away from the truth, forsaken the principles of life and salvation, and their God, until they are destroyed. This we cannot help. Let the pure in heart, and all those who desire the truth, magnify their calling, and they will have all the sorrow and misery they want. Still, the faithful servants and handmaidens of the Almighty never have, nor never will, suffer like the wicked have and will. The Latter-day Saints, in all their drivings, and persecutions, and sufferings in consequence thereof, have not begun to suffer the distress, the heart wringing, the great woe and slaughter that now spread gloom over our once happy land. If we could behold at one glance the suffering that is endured in one day through the war which is now depopulating some of the fairest portions of the land, we should become sick at heart and cry to God to close the vision. It is the kingdom of God or nothing with us, and by the help of the Almighty we shall bear it off triumphantly to all nations, gather Israel, build up Zion, redeem Israel, and Jesus Christ will triumph, and we shall reign with him on the earth, and possess it and all its fulness with him. May the Lord bless you. Amen.