

THE ATONEMENT

By -- Melvin J. Ballard

The theme which was assigned to me to discuss with you brethren and sisters was the Atonement. I am sorry that we had not a full presentation of the Fall before. That would naturally prepare the way; but perhaps by taking it in this way, you will get more out of the subject that will follow than you do out of this one.

The basis of my talk to you today, and I have not come with a scholarly address--I don't believe that that is the way to teach Mormon doctrine--the scholarly part is all splendid and excellent but in the presentation of these subjects the nearer we can in a heart to heart fashion present these things the more effective I believe it will be, so far as our stands are concerned; the basis of what I shall say will be on the Articles of our Faith to the effect that we believe through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel. Now, I wish to make just a few statements in connection with the subject so that we may get it under discussion in its right position as quickly as possible.

The Atonement, as has already been indicated, provides for the Fall of man. It provides for his death, spiritual and physical, not overlooking the more serious feature of that death, or the more serious part, which is spiritual, and it entails physical death as well. Spiritual death was the banishment from the presence and the knowledge of God, once lost of all that have heretofore known them. What they have done, where they went, is all obliterated, wiped out, so to speak, suspended and lost all that through the Fall. And what is the kind of death that will come in the conclusion, in the end? It is not unlike unto the first death, the second death, or the last death, which is spiritual also. It is not the spirit leaving a resurrected body, as some have mistakenly supposed, but the last death, like the first death which is spiritual, means the banishment from the presence of God and knowledge of the things of God in the final judgment that is placed upon the sons of perdition who are the participators in the second death, spiritually.

Now, the purpose of the atonement of Christ is to overcome the effects of physical death and spiritual death. The physical death, the overcoming of physical death, implies also the redemption of the earth, itself, for His atonement was made for the redemption of man and for the redemption of man's habitation. Now, just the why's and the wherefore's are exceedingly difficult to tell. We do not pretend to know it all. One of our mission presidents recently was quite distressed because we could not tell all the reason, the why's and the wherefore's of the atonement. The great and the fundamental thing for us to know is that it is a fact. We may know that it is a fact by reason and analogy. Yes, there is a field where we can use our judgment and reason, and certain evidences that seem to justify the atonement, but after all, the individual who teaches these boys and girls must know within him or herself absolutely by the revelations of God to that individual and the witness and testimony of the Holy Spirit

unfolding it to his own spiritual understanding--know it as you know there is a God and yet you have not seen Him. You know that the atonement is a fact. I may not know all the reason, the why's and the wherefore's, but it is a fact that should be known. It can be known.

As to the reason for an atonement, or the need of an atonement, certainly these physical bodies which we have received must have been, must be, a tremendous advantage to us. From all the analogy of the race we learn that we were waiting for the opportunity to enter into this physical body and obtain possession of it, and we anxiously awaited the time when we would come. The Lord said when the earth was ready and we were permitted to come we sang the songs of God, and the morning stars shouted for joy that the earth was ready where we could get a tabernacle in a physical body like this. The punishment of the rebels, the sons of God who went after Lucifer and his hosts, was that they were not permitted to come. If that would be their punishment, it must be a wonderful blessing that we are permitted to come and inhabit physical bodies. Those who were denied the privilege of coming have even tried to come in an awful way, and in many cases are cast out, and when they are cast out, as indicated in the Savior's casting some out, they desired a body so much that they were willing to take the body of a swine rather than to have no body at all. It must be a terrible punishment to them. The advantage of the body is perhaps more clearly seen if we will look at some other force, steam, for example, rises all over the face of the earth but it is not effective in accomplishing any end for the good of man or rendering any great amount of service until it is harnessed in a body, sent through the engine, then it can render service. Electricity that leaps from cloud to cloud, mountain top to mountain top is just as powerful, it is the same kind, but it does not do intelligent work, nor can it be controlled until you harness it--give it a body, so to speak, that it may be controlled and its operations directed. If these things are true, and they are, then the most subtle, the most intelligent, the most powerful of all the spirit forces there are is the spirit intelligence that dwells in us. There is not anything equal to it. Powers and forces of electricity and these other forces are insignificant in comparison to the power, to the might, to the ability of these children of our Heavenly Father, spirit children, and they, being given a body, become more effective. We can do things today that we never could do before we received these bodies. We are able to feel things that we never would have felt without these bodies. We never would have realized them. What would we have known of fatherhood and motherhood without these physical bodies? There would have been yearnings of the soul wholly unsatisfied, and there are a thousand other things that we would only have comprehended very meagerly, just anticipated and longed for and never could have accomplished without these physical bodies.

So these physical bodies are a great blessing to us in mortality, and we believe that they will be not only as great a blessing, but a far greater blessing, to spirits in the life that will come following the resurrection from the dead. Those who teach that the resurrection is the rising of the spirit out of the body do not comprehend, and it is a very strange thing to them, do not comprehend the necessity of a body after the resurrection. Sir Oliver Lodge in his book "Life After Death" gives some very excellent reasons why the

spirit is more powerful in earth life functioning here in a physical body, and then the strange conclusion he reaches after this life, we do not need a body any more. All the argument that he brings forth showing that we need a body in this mortal life is equally applicable and more so to the spirit after the resurrection. For instance, we will turn to do a thousand things that we are unable to do without a body. We will start but cannot finish because we have not a physical body. And so in the great providence of God, this body, this tabernacle, shall be ours in the resurrection. We shall be able to function and operate in all realms in the spirit world, able to grasp and comprehend spiritual things.

Before, we knew nothing of these conditions that attain in this mortal world. Now we know very little about spiritual things because the blinds are all pulled down, and for a wise purpose. If it were not so, we would be walking on the earth and living in the spirit realm. That is the trouble with those who run off on a tangent in the development of their spiritual or psychic forces. They will simply waste life in an effort to try to regain in this present time some knowledge of their wonderful selves, and they come down here and waste this day of instruction and profitable opportunity for us to learn something about the physical world and the control of the physical being, subjecting it to law. For we know when we go out of this life, in the time when the Lord sees fit, we will find there prepared and ready for us all the knowledge of the spiritual things we once knew, and that will be restored to us, and we will carry with us a knowledge of the physical so that at once and at the same time we will be able to function in spiritual things as well as material things as we function in material things now. And so by having a physical body we are able to attach these two realms, and without that physical body our future life would be curtailed. In order to provide for that resurrected body, it was essential that the Atonement should be provided. Otherwise, these bodies would lie in the grave, and we never worlds without end would have any control or power or influence over them again. They would be lost to us. He provides this habitation and that this instrument through which we may function and operate in all realms are graciously provided for us.

Now, just why it is necessary that the atonement should provide that means we are unable to say. There apparently were two ways by which, after the Fall of Man, he became mortal, and what Brother Whitaker has said I agree with, with reference to his fall and man's coming here. And when once man became mortal, there were two ways apparently by which he could get back. I do not think, when we consider the Fall, when we know all about the Fall--I do not think it happened in a day or in an hour--I think it was perhaps some process by which there was a change wrought upon the physical bodies of Adam and Eve, and they by partaking of things that only mortals should partake of, became changed. There was a way by which they could get back; one way was to partake of the things provided for immortals in the Garden of Eden, which if they had continued to have partaken of in the beginning they would have lived forever in their immortal state in the Garden; and the Lord sent an angel down to drive them out of the Garden lest they now, having fallen, stretch forth their hands and partake of the Tree of Life and live forever. You see, that was a possibility. If they had gone back and partaken now of the things which were provided

for them in their immortal state as they were placed in the Garden of Eden, they might have recovered from the mortal condition apparently, from that scripture, but the law had been broken, and by no such means as this could they now recover their fallen state and condition. I presume the immortal things in the Garden were destroyed so that man was left with but one choice now, or one means, and that was known beforehand, because the atonement was provided for before the foundation of the world. That was the end of it.

To help illustrate it sometimes I have used this story, or have called attention to the story that is so very vivid when once you have seen it or read it, to the minds of boys and girls, the story of Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde. The story sets forth that the man has two natures and the genial Dr. Jeckyl goes about continually doing good, blessing everybody; but he has discovered a potion of which when he takes it he puts the genial Dr. Jeckyl to sleep, so to speak, and awakens the other individual in Mr. Hyde. Then he discovers another potion by which when he wants to take it he can dethrone Mr. Hyde and become the genial Dr. Jeckyl again. You remember how that one works at counter purposes to the other one, exactly opposite, and after a while his potion fails and he dies.

Well, man has fallen. How can he get back? What is the antidote? The antidote was the tree of life, but he was driven out from it. Now what else? The antidote was the death of a God, and Jesus Christ was a God before He came into this world, and He was born the Son of God in this world and there was not in Him the elements of death. Dr. Talmage, I think, sets that forth in his "Jesus the Christ" which has the approval of the Presidency of the Church. So far as Jesus Christ was concerned, He was not subject to death. He, Himself, said, "I have power to lay down this body and take it up again," and He might have lived on and on, and the seeds of death were not in Him because His earthly sire was an immortal being, God. It was God's flesh and God's child, First Begotten in the spirit, and the Only Begotten in the flesh, come to appease and to atone. So many have asked, "Why didn't the Lord say, it worked out all right, we will just forgive, we will just pass it by--the end justifies the means?" The very foundations of God would totter if sin and transgression could be passed by lightly. The law of obedience through which He became what He is made it necessary that the transgression must be atoned for. The law of justice is older than the God who rules over the universe to which we belong - eternal. It must be satisfied. No passing it by, no setting it aside.

I liken it sometimes after a fashion that men and women, boys and girls could really understand. I call your attention to the fact that here is your home; this is the house in which you were born, your old homestead where you were as a child, here is the swimming pool, the orchard, the barn, all these things are very dear to you. You are in distress and need means. You put a mortgage on your old homestead, never expecting of course to lose it, but finally the mortgage comes due and you cannot pay it. The mortgage is foreclosed, your homestead is lost, the house where you were born, the place so dear to you, is lost, forfeited. Now a friend comes to the man who holds the mortgage. "You do not want that home, that property?" "No, I want my money, my interest." "All right, I have got it. I have got what will satisfy you", and it is paid. The mortgage is released, to the person who has

paid the price, who satisfied the holder of the mortgage. And now suppose the generous friend would come back to the boy or girl and say, "Would you like to have your old home back?" "Oh, yes, yes I would!" "All right. It is mine; I have bought it. I have settled with the holder of the mortgage, I have paid the price to satisfy him, and now it is mine. I am going to give it back to you on certain conditions. Now, I am not going to ask you for money. I am going to ask you for something else and return it to you wonderfully improved, wonderfully improved."

Is not that what actually has been done? The mortgage that was upon every one of us when we came into the world was death, and sooner or later the mortgage is foreclosed. You cannot escape the foreclosure of the mortgage. Death forecloses the mortgage and the holder receives our bodies. He has a claim upon them, in some way that we cannot explain; but it evidently is upon just as righteous and just principles as the settlement by money in this life to the holder of the mortgage. That which he obtains through dying, through man shedding his blood, He who was without sin, He who was not subject to death--it was to pass under the ban of death. He purchased something, something real, something tangible that satisfied the holder of that mortgage, and He has got enough of it to redeem every mortgage, but it is His. The scripture says He had purchased us, and we are His. He satisfied all the demands. Now that good and generous individual comes and says, "I am going to restore it to you, give you this house, this home you lived in, this tabernacle. I am going to give it back to you on conditions". And he that keeps the celestial law, I will give him a celestial body instead of a mortal body; instead of a mortal body a celestial body. And he that keeps the terrestrial law, a terrestrial body; and he that keeps a telestial law a telestial body, and last of all those who are not worthy, even to them I will give a body, the sons of perdition. But the giving of that body to them is a punishment instead of a blessing because they come out from the devil and his angels and they are distinguished characters. When the Lord put a punishment upon Cain he didn't terminate his life for murder; no, He put a mark on him and He sent him out to meet his fellows. And wherever he went, they would say, "There is the murderer, the man who killed his brother". And when you realize how he would be a hiss and a by-word, when he realized it, he said, "My punishment is greater than I can stand". And so will it be with the Sons of Perdition. The distinguishing mark upon them will be that they will have a resurrected body and they will go and dwell with the devil and his angels; they will be distinguished characters among multitudes, and they will be quarreling, claiming that they have an advantage, entitled to something more than the others, and yet they will be a hiss and a by-word on the part of those who never had a body, and this is why Jesus said, "It would have been better for them if they had never been born." They cannot give it up, it is theirs and yet they are to dwell with the devil and his angels. Every knee must bow and every tongue must confess, and what there must be so far as other things are concerned we do not know, but we do know what man must do to get a celestial body, and if man will do that, He who holds the mortgage will restore the home, the habitation of the spirit in glory and according to the law which man has kept, and give it to him as a lasting habitation.

I refer you to the 19th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants, beginning with the 15th verse:

"Therefore I command you to repent, repent, lest I smite you by the rod of My mouth, and by My wrath, and by My anger, and your sufferings be sore--how sore you know not! how exquisite you know not! Yea, how hard to bear you know not!

For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent. But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I.

Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit; and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink;

Wherefore, I command you again to repent lest I humble you with My almighty power, and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my spirit."

Now, He did assume to pay that debt and obligation to redeem us from death, and He did also purchase with or obtain with grace by which He can extend, on conditions of our repentance, salvation from individual sins. What do you think it was that made Jesus Christ go through such anguish and agony in the Garden of Gethsemene, when the pores of His body opened and drops of blood stood upon His brow instead of perspiration? Was it the fear of the nails and the cross? No, that was not what made Him tremble; it was not the physical death, for behold Him while upon the Cross, when the nails were driven through His hands and feet, there was no such exhibition on His part as the two thieves manifest. When they rallied, and when they were in great anguish and distress, He calmly endured it, once only asking for something to quench His thirst. And when they were going through such ....., the one on the right hand, the other on the left, when to hasten their death their legs were broken, when they came to Him, His death had been so peaceable, His emotions He revealed so little they did not know He was dead, and He was gone. So it was not physical fear that was upon Him. What was it? I believe with all my heart that when He went into the Garden of Gethsemene, He bowed Himself to receive upon His body, upon His soul, the sins of the world. That is why He cried, and said, "O, Father, if it is possible, if there is any other way and I can escape this terrible load, let that other way be revealed; but not My will but Thine be done".

To imagine that, or comprehend it, I call your attention to perhaps some things that you have experienced in your own life. It has been my duty many times while presiding in the mission field, and sometimes as an officer at home, to hear the private confessions, for when men and women sin in secret they are to confess in secret and be forgiven in secret that the sins may not be proclaimed, and that the Church may not be brought into reproach. I have had experience with some of these secret confessions where men and women have secretly sinned and done wrong, and have sought with tears of bitter anguish, with their hearts almost breaking, forgiveness. I have knelt with

them, after hearing their confessions, understanding their genuine repentance, having voted to forgive them, and have knelt and prayed with them that God would be merciful to them and forgive them, and I have tried to share in that way their sorrows, their anguish, and as I have just tasted or tested a little bit of it by seeking to bear the load with them, I have thought of the Master, I thought of the sins of the world, I have thought of them all combined together in one great load, and then placed upon Him. No wonder He staggered; no wonder He fainted on the road to Calvary. It was not physical exhaustion that was troubling Him; it was the tremendous load of the sins of the world, for when He received them in the garden they were so oppressive upon Him that His truly human body sweat drops of blood, and yet He bore them to the cross and they were upon Him when He was lifted up. And when He died, He died with the sins of the world upon Him, our individual sins; not altogether the atonement for to redeem man from the grave, but to pay the price and the penalty to obtain individual forgiveness; and all that is in the store house.

You know, the Catholic Church have a notion that they can sell that. That thought furnishes the basis of their selling indulgences and by the supposed righteousness of men and women who will go into the monasteries and caves and live there a life of supposed sacredness and holiness and acquire more salvation or more grace than is necessary for their own salvation, and that, together with the grace of God He hath obtained through His sacrifice and atonement, may be dispensed by the priests of the church to mete out and balance for you and you. I remember more than once having been to high mass, and on one occasion in Portland when the Archbishop performed high mass he explained it in English. He said "We have summoned an audience, summoned this soul of this man before the throne of God. We have pleaded his cause and he has been forgiven." Now, they believe that they can actually get that audience and that the grace necessary for balancing their account is available by their prayers and by their intercessions. Well, it is available all right, but it is available as we say, through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel. Those are the specifications and requirements by which the grace of God is available for salvation. I think sometimes in our own teaching, because we are rather averse to the extreme position of the sectarian world, we overlook the fact that grace will save. Sometimes we are inclined to go just a little bit to the other extreme and want to give works the burden. It is a combination of faith and works. It is absolutely true that by grace men are saved, but that grace is not available until men have done their part, until works have received consideration and until we have done all that we can do. But all that we can do would not amount to the chance of a rye straw to bring to pass our salvation were it not for the grace of God that He hath obtained through His death and His atonement for the pardon of individual sins. It is available and we can draw upon it when we have complied with the terms of His will. "The terms of the will"--and that brings me to another thought or point of view, looking at it; who gives us this life, who has given us the earth upon which we live?

John teaches to the Prophet Joseph Smith that Jesus Christ made the earth upon which we live, organized the elements, made that which we now possess and enjoy. And we do not need to sing "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere," we know that the resurrected, celestial beings shall dwell upon this earth, and this earth is according to celestial law.

and it is going to be redeemed. There won't be one-third celestial, nor a part telestial--it will all be celestial. We do not know where they will go, but it will not be on this celestial world, and all who dwell here will of necessity have celestial bodies. And so it is not a question of how or where or when; He is going to redeem it. He will touch it to purify it, fit it for a habitation. And now, hasn't He the right to specify the terms on which we shall inherit it? We should apply the case of our own law of inheritance whereby anybody who holds property has the right to ascribe the terms. No matter how we may dislike the terms, we cannot change it. He has established that he who holds property has a right to determine the means by which it can be inherited, and he can specify it in a will, and he cannot get it without complying with the terms of the will or conforming to the terms of that will before a legally appointed officer who has vested in him a right to give title to those who comply with the terms. That is exactly our present condition. If we inherit anything in these bodies, as I have indicated, He will have to provide it. Then He has the right to specify the terms on which we will inherit and live in it. That is perfectly legal and absolutely consistent, and although His terms may seem a little bit obnoxious or objectionable to us, He has a right to specify, and we cannot inherit unless we conform to the terms, and we have to do that, too, before we know who is legally appointed. It must be someone whom He has legally appointed to administer the terms of the will. The terms must be complied with, and that also before one legally appointed to administer the terms of the will.

The atonement of Jesus Christ also has a benefit upon the children who die without getting to the years of accountability, knowledge and understanding - for our scriptures are complete with evidence to the effect that those who die in their infancy, those who have not reached the age of accountability - and we have specified the age of accountability as eight - they are redeemed and saved by the atonement of Jesus Christ and have no need of baptism. So that places responsibility where there is intelligence and understanding and requires obedience; and where there is lack of intelligence and understanding to exercise, the mercy of God extends salvation to them.

Now, I believe that pretty well covers the point, the points I have in mind, but I wanted to say this, that after all, while these suggestions that I have made are only given to help to illustrate the wisdom, the glorious scheme of atonement, its blessings are manifest, but the reason, the why's and the wherefore's, we cannot fully give, but we can know absolutely that the atonement is essential, and that it is effective. I know it is. Personally, I know it is. I believe that you, as well as I, know that the atonement of Jesus Christ is a fact, that it is a reality. His own redemption from the grave is an evidence; His own restoration from physical and spiritual death to spiritual life and to resurrected life is a fact. And as it is a fact for Him, I know as I know I live that it will be a fact for every son and daughter of God. Just how these elements that compose, or of which the body was composed, may be brought together from the depths of the sea or from the deserts, I do not pretend to know, only I know that when the Master of all elements speaks, all elements obey Him, and will come in its order, for He has power over all things. That is when He speaks it will respond, just as loaves and fishes would come from the elements that existed, that He created. So when He speaks,



the earth will be redeemed, bodies will rise, be purified and glorified according to the law that men have lived, and by these promises will be purified, and every man and woman will get just what they work for. They will receive back, if they are faithful in keeping the commandments of God, a celestial body with celestial knowledge, celestial glory.

Now, I hope I have helped you a little bit, and that you will be able to walk by faith when you cannot walk by sight. A beautiful answer that Adam gave, I think, is one that we should always remember. When he was commanded to build an alter and offer a sacrifice, he did not comprehend the significance nor its meaning, but he obeyed, and when the angel came to him, as revealed in the Pearl of Great Price, one day and asked him, "Adam, why do you build this alter and offer this sacrifice?" he offered that majestic answer: "I know not save that God hath commanded it." That is enough. And so if you have reached the position, or if your students have reached the position where you cannot fully explain it to them, if they do not comprehend it, O may you have faith, not only for yourselves, but can stimulate in them faith to say, 'where I cannot see by reason I will walk by faith and believe in it because God hath said it'. That is enough. Let that suffice until the full and complete explanation will come to the soul. It is certain there will come a satisfaction that you know you are right. It occurred to Adam immediately how there would in due time come the Son of God who would die for the sins of the world.

Men and women must come to the place where they must walk by faith. God doesn't make always perfectly plain the why's and the wherefore's, but when He does it will be wonderful and beautiful, and the atonement will be one of the grandest things ever conceived by the mind of God. It is. I presume we could hardly grasp it in our present state and condition, and so we are asked to accept it, and to walk by faith, believing in it until the full explanation will come. God keep us walking by faith until that day, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.