

Sermonettes on the Teachings of Jesus

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

This Church of Christ was organized April 6, 1830, at Fayette, Seneca County, New York, by the will and commandment of God. The will of God was made known to a young man in answer to prayer during the course of a revival meeting which was being held in the City of Manchester, N. Y., during the winter of 1820. During this time he became anxious to know which of all the churches he should join, and his mind was directed by the Spirit of God to read James 1:5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Accordingly, he retired to the woods near his home on the morning of March 20, 1820, to pray, when he had the following experience as recorded by his own pen:

"I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, pointing to the other, 'This is my beloved Son, hear him.' My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join . . . I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of the sects was right.., for at the time it had never entered my heart that all were wrong... and which I should join. I was answered that I should **join none of them, for they were all wrong;** and the personage who addressed me said that their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt. 'They draw near me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrine the commandments of men, having a form of godliness but they deny the power thereof.' "

When this young man told his experience to some

of the ministers engaged in tine revival, he became subject, immediately, to all manner of persecution and violence of men. Such reaction only caused him to rely more than ever on the promises of the Lord, whom he sought constantly in prayer. In the following years he received, by the ministration of angels (Revelations 14:6), a full understanding of the gospel.

He was shown in vision, the location of an ancient record of the inhabitants of the Americas before Columbus and during the course of translating this “sealed book” (Isaiah 29:9-12; the Book of Mormon, C.L.W.), he relates that in the month of May, 1829 . . . “While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us saying:

“Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.”

Thus the priesthood authority, which had been taken from the earth during the dark ages, was again restored to earth, and at a later date, a direct revelation from God to this young prophet said: “If the people of this generation harden not their hearts, I will work a reformation among them, ... **and I will establish my church, like unto the church which was taught by my disciples In the days of old.**”

Having thus been instructed, and divinely commissioned and ordained by a heavenly messenger to preach this everlasting Gospel to the children of men (Revelations 14:6), and as provided in the scriptures, i. e., “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron (Hebrews 5:4)

These men went forth declaring this Restored Gospel everywhere, baptizing In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19), until by direct command of the Lord they met in a house near Waterloo, New York, and organized this Church of Christ on Apr 11 6, 1830.

Never before in the history of the world, was the time auspicious for the setting up of the church or Kingdom of God in these last days, according to the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, as found in Daniel the 2nd chapter. This great image stood up in its fourfold state, complete for the first time in the year of 1830. By Daniel it was revealed to the king that this event, of setting up the kingdom of God for the last time, would be “in the latter day” (Ibid. Verse 28), for “in the days of these kings” (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, which should all be world powers at one and the same time, 1830 C.L.W.) “Shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever.” (Ibid. verse 44)

This organization provided for a New Testament form of church government, the restoration of all the ministry, the gifts of the gospel, i. e., working of miracles, healing of the sick, gifts of prophesy, of tongues and the interpretation of tongues, and a belief in the principle of continuous revelation; that the canon of scripture was not full, and that many great and precious things of God are yet to be revealed of Him for the blessing of mankind.

The ministry was to consist of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists (or Seventies), Bishops, Pastors, Elders, Priests, Teachers, and Deacons. (I Corinthians 12: 28, 29; Eph. 4:11; I Tim. 3:1-13) The tenets of faith and doctrine to be, Faith in God the Eternal Father (Hebrews 6:1, 11:6); in His Son Jesus Christ (John 10:9, 14:6; Roman, 5:1); in the Holy Ghost, the Comforter (John 14:16-26, 16:7-14); also repentance from dead works (Mark 1:14, 15; Heb. 6:1; Luke 5:32; Acts 3:19); and baptism by immersion for the remission of sins (Matthew 3:11, 28:19; Acts 2:38, 19:2-5; Romans 6:3-6); the laying on of hands for the gift of The Holy Ghost (Acts 8:14-17, 19:1-6); for the ordination of the

(Numbers 8:10, 27:18; Deut. 34:9; Acts 6:6, 13:3; I Tim. 4:14); the blessing of little children (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16); for the healing of the sick (Mark 16:18; James 5:14, 15); a belief in the resurrection of the dead (Hebrews 6:2; Job 14:14, 19:23-27; Isaiah 26:19; Psalms 49:14, 15; Hosea 13:14; John 5:25, 28, 29, 11:25; Revelations 20:12, 13); also a belief in the Eternal Judgment (Hebrews 6:2, 9:27; Ecclesiastes 3:16, 17; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:5; Rev. 20:12).

We believe also that we should go on from obedience and belief in these principles to perfection, and shall “add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” (II Peter 1:5.9)

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Jesus said, in His first recorded sermon (Mark 1:14, 15), “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel,” and at another time He said to His disciples, “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;” etc. (Luke 22: 29) This kingdom was identified as the Church of Christ, for He said, “. . . I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

Let us, then, learn all we can about this God “appointed” kingdom which Jesus said “is at hand,” and against which “the gates of hell shall not prevail.” He was not speaking of a temporal kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom, and against it the gates of hell will not prevail. In this world of today, as the result of two great world wars, we have seen the decay and overthrow of earthly kingdoms, and how the forces of wickedness and corruption are prevailing against them. But the kingdom of God, being spiritual, was to endure forever, even as the prophets of old have declared to us:

“How great are his signs! And how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation” (Daniel 4:3); and again: “I saw in the night visions, 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.

“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13, 14)

And the prophet Isaiah, in speaking of the coming of Christ’s kingdom, said:

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace
“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,” etc. (Isaiah 9:6,7)

These things being true, and I assure you, as a servant of God, that they are, then—

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest, heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

“God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”
(Hebrew 2:1-4)

Therefore, being surrounded with so great a cloud of witnesses, remember: “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2); seek ye the Lord while He may be found; make it a point to attend services with the true Church of Christ which has been restored in these last days for the restoration of His people, and the preparing of a people for the coming of the Lord.

FAITH IN GOD

In speaking of these days when the whole world was to be in commotion (Luke 21:9 and II Timothy 3:1-7), Jesus said:

“Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)

This question by Jesus, clearly indicates that because of corruption and sin that was to be in the earth in our days, the possibility would arise wherein men and women would lose faith in God and one another: “because iniquity (wickedness; sin, C.L W.) shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” (Matthew 24:12)

For this reason we should examine our personal standing before God, as to whether or not our faith is sufficient to sustain us in the days ahead, when fear shall fill the hearts of ungodly men, and they who know not God shall find their lives lonely and barren. For “without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently (not spasmodically, when trouble fills us with fear, C. L. W.) seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) Thus we learn that it is the man or woman who diligently seeks the Lord in faith and prayer, who shall be rewarded.

Therefore, if we profess to believe in God, we must believe that He is, that He is omnipresent, a presently living God, not alone of the past, nor yet of the future, but the God of this present moment and hour, who alone is able to comfort us and console us in times of fear and trouble such as is coming upon the earth.

So when we need help that is greater than human hearts or hands can give, we must believe that God, the Eternal Father, is the source of all solace and comfort that cannot be equaled or derived from any other source.

We have heard people say, We do not believe in miracles, or the gifts of healing, or of tongues, or prophecy, as they have been done away since the day of the apostles. To such we can only say, as did Jesus and His disciples to the unbelievers and scoffers of their day: Oh ye of little faith, know ye not that—

“Christ truly said unto our fathers, If ye have faith, ye can do all things which are expedient unto me. And now I speak unto all the ends of the earth, that if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief.”
(Moroni 10:17,18)

Under these circumstance, let those who doubt the constancy of God, and His unchangeability, repent of such unbelief, and seek the Lord while He may be found, for His Spirit will not always strive with those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and walk contrary to His ways. We therefore, as the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, invite you to come to the true Church of Christ, where the fullness of His gospel is preached, and where all the ordinances of the gospel are enjoyed, that your faith in God may be increased, and you may learn to glorify Him in your life among men as you have never done before.

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” (Romans 10:13-15) “. . .The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” (I Corinthians 1:18)

REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

When Jesus began his public ministry shortly after he had been baptized of John the Baptist, in the waters of Jordan (Matthew 3:13-17), and had been tempted forty days and nights by the devil (Matthew 4: 1-11), the first thing he taught the people was to repent, as one of the prerequisites to entering the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 4:17) This doctrine of repentance was not only taught by Jesus and his apostles, but by the prophets of old, as one of the first steps toward a richer spiritual life in God. Paul taught it as “repentance from dead works” (Hebrews 6:1), and John the Baptist taught it as a necessary step in preparation for baptism of water for the remission of sins. (Matthew 3:1-9; Mark 1:18)

Jesus said, in this connection (Luke 5:32), “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;” and on the occasion when He preached to the Galileans, whose “blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices” (Luke 13: 1-5), He said:

“Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

“I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

“Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

“I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Like those of that day, people now too often judge those around them to be sinners “above all men” because some calamity has befallen them, forgetful that they themselves are likewise sinners, not having obeyed the Lord; therefore such should

pay the more earnest heed to these words of Jesus:
“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

True repentance involves these three steps:

1. Godly sorrow: “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” (II Corinthians 7:10)

2. Confession of sin: “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.” (Psalm 51:2, 3)

3. Renunciation of sin: “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

“Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.” (I Peter 3:10, 11)

If you can say from the heart, after examining your life, “I am sorry and ashamed of the sins of my life, and the sinful way I act,” and are willing to confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who died upon the cross to cleanse you from sin by his blood (for He alone can forgive your sins), and if you are ready to “eschew evil,” that is, forsake it and flee from it to avoid it, then blessed shall be your hope of the fulness of joy and the more abundant life in Christ, for in doing so you have claim upon the promises of God, who said:

“Come flow, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;” etc. (Isaiah 1:18)

BAPTISM IS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

When Jesus told Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3: 5) He had reference to the doctrine that Paul gave as the third principle of the gospel, in his epistle to the Hebrews, which was baptism. (Hebrews 6:2)

There are those who teach, and have led many innocent souls to believe, that baptism by water is not essential to salvation, which doctrine is not only false, but leads many innocent, honest persons to err in their understanding of the requirements they must comply with in order to enter the kingdom of God.

The doctrine of baptism was not new in the days of John the Baptist, nor of Jesus, nor of his apostles. For” ... the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham.. .“ (Galations 3:8), for which cause we learn that even the law of Moses which was given 430 years later, did not disannul the gospel principles, for Paul said:

“Moreover brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; **and were all baptized unto Moses** in the cloud and in the sea.” (I Corinthians 10:1, 2)

Baptism, therefore, as a principle of salvation, was associated with the gospel from ancient times, and as John the Baptist taught it in the wilderness of Judea, even so Christ taught it, saying, we must “be born of water and of the Spirit,” before we could enter into His kingdom. The apostles of Jesus bore the same record. Paul said:

“. . . Therefore we are buried with him (Christ, C.L.W.) by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory

The gospel of Jesus Christ provides for the principle of laying on of hands, which has a four-fold purpose in the Church of Christ, i.e., the confirmation of its converts to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; the ordination of its ministry; the healing of the sick; and blessing of children. By this means we enjoy many of the blessings of God, and receive authority from Him to minister in the ordinances of the gospel.

When Jesus commissioned [us first Council of Twelve Apostles to go forth among men to promulgate this gospel and build up the Kingdom of God on the earth, He said:

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28: 18-20)

On another occasion, when He appeared unto them after the resurrection, He said:

“Peace unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” (John 20:21)

Having been sent of God to establish His church among men, and in turn commissioning His twelve disciples to go forth and teach the gospel to the nations, we will now consider what the power was that was given to Jesus. Turning to the words of the prophet Habakkuk, we find the following concerning God and the Holy One of Israel (the Holy One of God, Mark 1: 24), who is Jesus the Christ:

“God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.” (Habakkuk 3:3, 4)

Thus we learn that Jesus, the Holy One of God, came from mount Paran with horns in his hand (a figure of speech indicating that through the use of His hands the blessings of the gospel would be conveyed to the children of men), therefore, when He appeared unto His disciples, and said, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you,” He indicated that they would have the same power and authority vested in them.

Therefore, we will now examine the four-fold uses of the principle of the gospel:

t For the confirmation of converts for the gift of the Holy Ghost:

“... Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of **laying on of hands**, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” (Hebrews 6:1, 2)

“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost ... Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 8:14-17)

Many other scriptures could be cited to show the necessity of laying on of hands to confirm the church, but we will close with this commentary:

“After baptism, the hand is imposed by blessing and calling and inviting the Holy Spirit, who willingly descends from the Father on the bodies that are cleansed and blessed (by baptism).” Tertullian, a disciple of the 2nd century A. D.

2nd Laying on of hands used for the ordination of the ministry:

“And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.” (Hebrews 5:4)

“And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me In the priest’s office, . and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office.” (Exodus 28:1-41)

In Acts 6:1-6, we learn of the choosing of seven men to have the oversight of the temporal affairs of the church. They were chosen by the people, and “set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.”

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” (Acts 13:2, 3)

3rd Laying on of hands to heal the sick:

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” (James 5:14, 15)

“These signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” (Mark 16:17, 18) (See also Acts 5:12-16, 9:17, 18, 28:8, 9; Mark 6:4, 5, 7:32; Luke 4:40)

4th Laying on of hands for the blessing of children:

“Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.” (Matthew 19:13-15) (See also Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15)

This was one of the gifts of the gospel which was restored in these last days, and there are thousands who can testify of a truth to the healing they have received through the exercise of this gift through the ministry of Christ. Come ye also, and be healed by the power of God which is hidden in the hands of his apostles and elders, for it is the free gift of God, if you have faith to call upon the name of the Lord. Oh, ye of little faith, why deny the sure mercies of God, and that tiiis blessed gift is among men even to this present day? not by the laying of hands upon the radio, the television, or just saying you believe, but by the gospel provision of laying on of hands and anointing with oil by the servants of God, who have been called and sent forth in these last days to minister unto you.

Further information on these gifts of the gospel can be obtained by writing to the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), P. O. Box 472, Independence, Mo. 64051.