

# “Heaven Doesn’t Matter”

LEGRAND RICHARDS

Wouldn’t that be wonderful if it were true that I was a marvelous work and a wonder. It’s a great honor, brothers and sisters, to have the invitation to talk to you here today. I feel mighty frightened right at this moment when I think that you are all college students and professors and I am just a country boy who milked the cows and didn’t even have a high school in his town. To come here I feel embarrassed. But I am grateful for this great university, and I am grateful to be one of the Board of Trustees.

I think of the experience of the Prophet Joseph when he was only eighteen years old and was visited three times during the night by Moroni and again the next morning. Moroni quoted various passages of scriptures, telling him that they were about to be fulfilled. One was from the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, where Isaiah said that the Lord would set his hand again the second time to gather scattered Israel, that he would bring in the dispersed of Judah, that he would set up an ensign unto the nations. Now, whether you realize it or not, this institution is an ensign to the nations—there isn’t anything else like it in all the world—and so is the great organization of this church. And I thank the Lord for the faith that I have that the promises of the prophets will be

fulfilled, that this work will continue to spread abroad until it shall fill the whole earth. I think you students are privileged to be here with these wonderful men and women of the faculty who have faith in the Lord and are helping to plant into your hearts a love for the Lord and a love for his truth and to prepare you for the positions of responsibility and leadership in our Father’s kingdom and also in the world.

Now, in the last general conference, which just ended a week ago, I spoke a little on the eternal duration of the marriage covenant and the family unit, and I quoted from a survey that had been made of nine of the largest churches indicating that there wasn’t one of those churches that believed in the eternal duration of the marriage covenant and the family unit. If you were to take that out of our church what would there be left to look forward to? I remember a little statement that appeared in the *Reader’s Digest* some years ago from Channing Pollock, entitled “Heaven Doesn’t Matter,” and I just wonder whether

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heaven *would* matter if we didn't believe in the eternal duration of the marriage covenant and the family unit. I'd like to read that little statement from Channing Pollock. After philosophizing on the kinds, of heaven that people expect to obtain, and, referring to Aunt Jane, he adds:

*Shall we like her, or ourselves, as disembodied spirits? I've never thought of myself as a materialist, but the things I've enjoyed all seem to have required body and mind. . . .*

*In the resurrection, there is to be no marriage nor giving in marriage—and that's a big drawback, too. Personally, I can't conceive a heaven without it. My own ego is so inextricably blended with that of my wife, and my own happiness has been so long part of hers. Nor would it help much to be vaguely associated with her in spirit. Married life is made up of so many physical and mental contacts, of so many shared fears and hopes, sorrows and joys, pains and comfortings that both of us, and millions of other wives and husbands, couldn't help missing terribly in any conceivable resort of souls. [Reader's Digest, 30 (January 1937):23]*

Now we have a message for those millions who couldn't be happy with that kind of philosophy, because we have a true conception that has come to us through the restoration of the gospel in our day and time.

### **An Eternal Weight of Glory**

I'd like to read you just a little statement from the Doctrine and Covenants to show how definitely the Lord has indicated in his revelations the eternal duration of the marriage covenant. He said,

*For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for that blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundations of the world. . . .*

*Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry not by me nor by my word,*

*and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world.*

*Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage [that has to be done here]; but are appointed angels in heaven; which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.*

*For these angels did not abide my law; therefore, they cannot be enlarged, but remain separately and singly, without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity; and from henceforth are not gods, but are angels of God forever and ever. [D&C 132:5, 15–17]*

Now, I've done a lot of missionary work, and I've talked to many leaders and members of other churches, and if you were to promise them that they could be angels in heaven they'd be satisfied. But not so with the Latter-day Saints. In this revelation the Lord has made it very clear that unless there be this binding together under the new and everlasting covenant they can be ministering angels to those who are worthy of a far greater degree of glory. And so heaven *does* matter to Latter-day Saints when they understand these things, and it gives them something to work for and something to seek for.

Now I'll read you, out of that same section of the Doctrine and Covenants, a statement to those who do qualify. Compare this with the other one that I just read you:

*It shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; it shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a*

*fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.* [D&C 132:19]

What a marvelous promise! We don't need to say, like Channing Pollock, that heaven doesn't matter. If we just knew and could understand what awaits us when we've finished our lives here, I am sure that the greatest ambition of our lives would be to prepare ourselves for the life that is to follow. Just as you've come here to school to prepare yourselves to be successful in the battle of life, to be able to enjoy the comforts of life, to be able to enjoy the companionship of educated and trained people, to be able to be leaders and not leaners in this great world, you'd also want to plan for that eternity that follows.

Now I don't know whether you ever think of how long eternity is. My wife doesn't like to. But when we had been married for thirty-five years, I said, "Mummy, what do you think we'll be doing thirty-five million years from today?"

She said, "Where'd you get that crazy idea? It makes me tired to think of it."

"Well," I said, "you believe in eternal life, don't you?" I said, "In the Book of Mormon we're told that time is measured only to man, that with God there isn't such a thing as time. It's one eternal round. And the Prophet Joseph illustrated by taking a ring. When you cut it, he said, there's a beginning and there's an end, but as long as you don't cut it there's no beginning and there's no end." I said, "Now, Mother, if you believe that, you and I ought to be pretty well acquainted with each other thirty-five million years from today."

Now, I have a little talk on how long eternity is that makes thirty-five million years look like just the snap of your fingers. Now, if you have the capacity and the faith to believe such a thing, just think of how important heaven is. You won't say, like Channing Pollock, that heaven doesn't matter. It becomes the most

important destiny to which you strive, and you'll prepare yourself to be exalted there.

### **What Is Salvation?**

When I was a boy, a little saying that we learned in our ward went like this: "To Latter-day Saints, salvation without exaltation is damnation." And I've never forgotten that. The Christian world as a whole does not give much thought to heaven and what will happen after this life. I've talked to many Christians, and about all they think about is to be saved, but they don't know what they mean by being saved. I sat in the study of Peter Marshall, who at the time of his death was the chaplain of the United States Senate, and he said, "A person can be saved just like that," and snapped his finger.

I said, "I've never thought it was quite that easy myself, Doctor Marshall."

Now, when you tie them down to what they mean by being saved, about all they can think of is to escape eternal burning. They think that if they're not saved they're going to burn in that fire that never ends, and so forth.

I've talked to them. Back in South Carolina, at the close of a conference meeting, I was invited to go with the missionaries into the home of a minister, and the leader of the group said to this minister, "President Richards answered the question we were discussing."

"That so?" he said. "What did he say?"

The district president turned to me and said, "Brother Richards, you tell him."

"Well," I said, "I'd be glad to do that, but I'd lots rather tell him why he ought to join the Mormon Church."

The minister said, "Well, I'd like you to tell me that, but could I ask you one question before you do?"

"Certainly," I said. "What is it?"

He said, "Can a man be saved before he dies or does he have to die before he is saved?"

Down in the South where I labored they all think they're saved. And you know these

preachers that gather the multitudes in. All you have to do is to acknowledge that Jesus is your Savior and then you're saved. So when the minister asked me that question I said, "Now, if you'll tell me what you mean by being saved, I'll answer your question." He thought a minute, and he went red in the face, and I knew he was embarrassed with about eight Mormon missionaries sitting right there, and I said, "I'll tell you what we believe. We believe that we were saved before we were born. If we hadn't been, we would have been cast out with Satan and a third of the hosts of heaven. We believe that we might be saved every day that we live, for when we learn a principle of truth and we obey that principle we're saved from the consequences of a broken law. We believe that we might be saved every day after we die. To a Latter-day Saint," I said, "salvation is a process and not an end." And I quoted the words of the Prophet Joseph where he said that a man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge.

Now, the Lord might forgive us, as these preachers tell us, if we believe in Jesus Christ; but he can't reward us for what we haven't done just because we acknowledge the Savior as our only Savior. And so you follow the prophecies in the scriptures of the things that are to transpire. You remember that when John was banished upon the Isle of Patmos he saw the new heaven and the new earth—when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"; and when we should no more need the sun by day or the moon by night, because the glory of God would be upon the earth; when no man would say, "Know ye the Lord?" for every man would walk in the light of the Lord, his God. (See Revelation 21:4, 23–24.) And then he "saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened. . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"

(Revelation 20:12). Now, that isn't just an acknowledgment; that's the things that have to be written up to our credit, that we be lifters and not just leaners. And then he said, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." But they shall become kings and priests unto the most high God and shall rule and reign with him forever (Revelation 20:6).

Think of that. That doesn't sound like sitting around and playing a violin or a harp forever. And that's about all that the ordinary Christian can think of for salvation. I think it would become a little monotonous; and furthermore, as far as I'm concerned, I'm off on the wrong foot if that's what heaven is, because I don't know one note from another. And I'll have to start all over again.

Can you imagine sitting and playing a harp forever and forever? As one man put it, "For the first million years he wants to look at the face of the Savior." (Now don't think that I'm sacrilegious.) And then he said for the next ten minutes he wanted to look at his wife, and then he wanted to look at the Savior for the rest of eternity.

Now, it seems to me that anyone with common sense ought to realize that a person has a greater destiny than anything like that. This life ought to be a preparation for steps forward and upward in achievement and accomplishment that we've never dreamed of here in this life, and that's what my faith is.

And then take the parable of the talents. To the one that had received five talents and to the other that had received two the Lord said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21). That doesn't sound like sitting around and twiddling your thumbs and looking at something forever, does it? He'll make us ruler over many things. What are we going to rule over? These are things we'll find out, and this is why we

have this eternal principle of the eternal duration of the marriage covenant.

I feel sorry for people who don't understand these eternal truths. They are the truths we want you young people to understand, so that you'll make no mistakes when you marry and will be sealed by the power of the holy priesthood under the new and everlasting covenant so that you can be prepared for that glory.

Why do we have the three degrees of glory if we only have to believe on the Savior in order to be saved? And when we're saved, which one of those glories are we going to go to? You see, they don't understand. That's the way people's minds are blinded by the leaders of men. That's why Isaiah saw that because they teach for doctrine the precepts of men the Lord would proceed to bring forth a marvelous work and a wonder, which would cause the wisdom of their wise men to perish. They don't understand these things.

Now, I have no objections to preaching that one must acknowledge that Jesus is the Savior, but it takes more than that. You remember when they came to John the Baptist to be baptized of him, he saw that they hadn't changed their lives. He said, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matthew 3: 7-9). You see, John understood that it took more than just an acknowledgment. Jesus said that if the blind lead the blind they fall into the ditch together. He didn't say that they would be saved together, but that they would fall into the ditch together. And so it's necessary that we have some conception of what awaits us and why we should prepare for it.

### **Build on the Right Foundation**

Now, the Bible is so plain in its teachings of the eternal duration of the marriage covenant and the family unit, I don't see how anybody could fail to understand it. When he placed Adam in the garden, the Lord said it wasn't good for man to be alone. And he made a helpmeet for him, and he said that "they twain shall be one flesh" (Matthew 19:5). Now if you divide *one*, you have only two halves; you don't have two ones. And no man or woman can attain the highest degree of the celestial kingdom without companionship. Thank God that he has arranged a thousand-year millennial reign for these wonderful women that are not willing to give themselves away on good-for-nothing men. (You know what I mean. You wouldn't have any of them like that down here [at BYU]. I tell the girls it's a happy hunting ground down here; but in the world generally, it would be better to wait.)

We run onto many little experiences and stories. For instance, in California some years ago I went to a Relief Society bazaar with my daughter there—her daughter's sitting right down here this morning—and I met a woman who came up here to go to the Y and started keeping company with a young man who was a member of the Church but wasn't at all active in the Church. When he became serious and proposed to this woman, she said, "I'll never marry a man who doesn't do his duty in the Church and honor his priesthood. I'm going to be able to point to my children and say, 'You follow your father.'" He wasn't willing to pay the price; so their courtship ended right there. In a short time she started keeping company with another young man. He proposed, and their engagement was announced in the newspaper, and a copy of that newspaper was sent to the first suitor in Chicago, where he was living at the time. When he read it, he called her up all the way to Los Angeles—this was before they had those cheap rates—and he said, "I can't live without you. If you'll call off that

engagement and give me another opportunity, I'll do anything and everything you ever ask me to do in the Church." When I met them down there in California (she was the daughter of one of the families that lived in the stake there when I was the president), he was a counselor in the bishopric. I've since checked with the stake president, and he said the man later became the bishop and was the best bishop in the stake. And here—just a year ago in April, I think it was—I met him in front of the Hotel Utah. He had just been appointed a member of the stake presidency. Now, there was a girl who understood what it meant to build on the right kind of foundation, who understood that life beyond this life is more important than this and that it pays to make preparation for it.

I've sometimes used the little illustration of an incident that occurred when they built the Salt Lake Temple. President Brigham Young came on one occasion and found the workmen throwing in chipped granite, and he made them take it out and put in those great granite blocks, with this explanation: "We're building this temple to stand through the Millennium." Now, we're building our lives to stand through the Millennium, and if we live for it we can spend that thousand years with Jesus when he comes to reign upon the earth. For Paul tells us that he shall reign until he has subdued all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy is death. And then he will deliver the kingdom up as a bride prepared for her bridegroom. But those who are not worthy to come forth on the morning of that resurrection, we're told, shall not come forth till the end of the thousand years, and then they'll receive their place in one of these lower kingdoms. Is it worth working far? A thousand years in the presence of the Lord, to help him and to be among the lifters. I think it will be the lifters that he'll call forth and not the leaners, and so we have to be workers in the kingdom.

I'll tell you another little story about a young man who called me one day. You may have heard me tell this. He said, "Is this Bishop Richards?"

I said, "Yes, sir."

"Well," he said, "I'm in trouble."

"What's your trouble?" I said.

He said, "I've been keeping company with a girl for three years, and she heard you talk the other night and now she won't go out with me any more."

"Why won't she?"

"Because I'm not active in the Church."

I said, "Good for her. I'm glad to know that there's at least one girl in Israel who'll listen to an old man like me. Now," I said, "what are you going to do about it?"

He said, "What *can* I do?"

"Get active in the Church," I said, "and then go back."

"How can I?" he said.

I said, "You go talk to your bishop. If he doesn't help you, you come back to me and I will." He hasn't come back.

I tell you, brothers and sisters, this, we are told in the Book of Mormon, is the time to prepare ourselves to meet the Lord, and if we're going to do that we've got to set our goals and build upon solid foundations. It's a time to work and not just to sit around and do nothing.

When I finished my first mission in Holland and I arrived in Liverpool—that's where the headquarters of the European Mission was at that time—Brother Charles W. Penrose was then the president of that mission. (He later became a member of the First Presidency.) They were holding a meeting, and my companion and I slipped in the back of the meeting while it was in process. Brother Penrose was preaching on the fallacy of the Christian idea that all we had to do in the next world was to take it easy. And then he went on, "If that's what heaven is, it wouldn't be heaven for men like Brother Richards down there and myself, would it, Brother Richards?" I didn't know that

he knew I was in that meeting, but that's the way I felt toward life.

When I had a heart attack up in Grace, Idaho, back in 1942, I was away from my work for six weeks. I was then the Presiding Bishop of the Church, and I tell you I almost sweat blood to think that I had to be on that bed and couldn't be out working. So the first meeting that we attended as a bishopric with the First Presidency after I returned, I said to the Presidency, "I found out what hell is."

President Clark said, "What is it, Bishop?"

I said, "To see the other fellow working when you can't work." I said, "If there's any truth to the words of the song that there's sweet, sweet rest in heaven, I'm going to ask to be routed the other way."

My counselor, Bishop Ashton, was witty, as you might remember, and he said, "Well, Bishop, I wouldn't worry too much about that if I were you. You may not have to ask for it."

I said, "Yeah, I've thought of that too."

The apostle Paul, who was caught up into the third heaven and the paradise of God and saw things he was not permitted to write, said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). I hope that you all can feel that in your own hearts and realize how important this life is to prepare for what awaits us if we prepare ourselves for It. And if you will, you'll be honored in this life, you'll be successful in life, and that's why you're here at this school. And I commend you all for being here and for your desire.

### **It's Worth It**

Brother Wilkinson told us once in one of our meetings—and I have since heard it broadcast over KSL—that a survey taken here in the United States indicated that on the average for the nation, a man who gets a college education

earns during his lifetime \$176,000 more than a high school graduate. Then I always say to the students, "If the going ever seems a little difficult and the exams are hard and you have to burn the midnight oil, just put a little plaque on the wall: \$176,000. Then ask yourself whether it pays or not."

I remind you of the words of the apostle Paul: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And then he adds, "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7–8). You have to decide each day how you're going to sow seed that will make you happy in this life and make you worthy of the love and respect of good people and the love of your Father in heaven. Then you have to decide what you're going to do to prepare yourselves for that great eternity that awaits you, and particularly for the thousand-year millennial reign.

With all my heart I pray God to bless you. I can't read that clock, but it looks like it's time for me to quit. So I leave you my love and blessing. And I want to tell you that I have four grandchildren attending school here, and I have one great-granddaughter, and we love them and we love all of our family, and I'd just as soon believe that death was a complete annihilation of both body and spirit as to think that I had to live forever and forever after I pass out of this life without a continuation of the love ties that bind me and my wife and our wonderful family together. I don't know what there really would be to live for. I'd just as soon call it quits. So I thank God for this great eternal truth of the eternal duration of the marriage covenant and the family unit. I hope you will all live and set your mark to achieve that objective and goal in life. I leave you my blessing in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.