

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: ALL THINGS TO ME ARE SPIRITUAL

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 28:9

Wherefore, verily I say unto you, that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal, neither any man, nor the children of men; neither Adam your father, whom I created; behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandment, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him; for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural, nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual.

What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world
and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36)

We live in a materialistic age. One of the marks of materialism is a disbelief in anything which cannot be seen, felt, tasted, smelled, weighed, measured, and analyzed in the chemical laboratory. Growing out of this attitude is the tendency to separate all things into two categories -- spiritual and material, and to assume that the spiritual is the immaterial and the unreal, while the material is the tangible and real. Spirit and matter are thought of as being mutually opposite or antagonistic to each other. This concept is not necessarily so.

Modern atomic science is now unanimously agreed that all tangible matter with form, substance, mass, weight, density, and visibility is composed of completely immaterial spirit, force, mind, electricity, or energy. Does it follow from this that spirit or energy or electricity is immaterial? It is difficult to answer that question and to be sure of one's answer. If you have ever felt the jolt from an electrical shock, you would hesitate to say that electricity is immaterial, even though you cannot weigh it as you would a pound of butter, or measure it as you would a board, or pour it out of a bottle as you would milk. If all matter is composed of spirit, mind, force, energy, or electricity, is spirit any less real than matter simply because in its pure state it is intangible to our physical senses? Or if you take the opposite position, that spirit is the only real thing in the universe, can you say that matter is any less real than spirit when all matter is produced by and comes from spirit?

We should be very careful how we attempt to divide everything into two watertight compartments -- spiritual and temporal, or spiritual and physical, or spiritual and material. The two fields overlap each other at many points. It is impossible to separate them from each other completely. One is just as real as the other. One thing is true, however. Spirit is pre-eminent. It existed first. It can and does exist independent of matter. It is the cause or source of all the material universe. Spirit will remain when all the material universe has dissolved away.

God is a Spirit; but according to the propositions we have laid down, this does not necessarily force us to the conclusion that God is immaterial, or that he cannot be seen, recognized, and understood by spiritual perception. We would all agree that God, who is a spiritual Being, cannot be seen by the physical eye, or completely apprehended by any of the physical senses. This is the meaning of the familiar statement of scripture that "no man hath seen God at any time." But again we must be careful not to carry this conclusion too far. God can have, does have, and has had physical manifestations which could be seen and apprehended and understood by mortal men. Jesus was such a manifestation -- God incarnate in human flesh; and Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Moses saw God in the burning bush. Israel saw him in the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day. Perhaps under a spiritual quickening. Isaiah saw him sitting on his throne, high and lifted up; and Ste-

phen as he was martyred saw him with Christ at his right hand. In these manifestations and perhaps others, he had recognizable physical form.

Rather than trying to divide all things into spiritual and material, as if the two terms were mutually exclusive, why not say that all things are either temporal or eternal? Material things are temporal; spiritual things are eternal. Paul says, in II Corinthians 4:18 that "the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." He does not say that the material things of this earth are unreal, but that they are temporary. Temporal things are things pertaining to time, as distinguished from eternity. They are things having to do with this life, this world. They are things perishable and transitory. They are things which pass away and return to their original status as force, energy, electricity, mind, or spirit; but spirit is eternal, imperishable. It can never pass away; it can never be destroyed, though it may assume a continuing stream or succession of different forms. Spirit came first. It is the source or cause of all temporal things. It will continue to exist when time is no more and when earth and heavens have dissolved away.

This suggests another passage in the book of Doctrine and Covenants which says, speaking of the righteous: "notwithstanding they die, they shall also rise again a spiritual body" If we read into this statement the common misconception that "spiritual" means intangible, non-material, non-physical, it does not make sense. Jesus rose, a spiritual body; yet it was tangible. Thomas doubted, but in company with the other apostles, he saw that body, felt it, inspected its wounds, heard Jesus speak, watched as he ate fish at a seaside meal. A spiritual body is not necessarily an immaterial one -- a spectre, ghost, or wraith -- but an indestructible, eternal, immortal body, as opposed to a temporal or temporary body which endures only for time, but not for eternity.

Our first text from the Doctrine and Covenants says that all things to God are spiritual. They are spiritual in that nothing which God does is done for temporary ends alone. His commandments may

be immediately concerned with temporal things, with physical acts, with tangible substances, but God's final concern is that these temporal things might be used to achieve spiritual or eternal ends. God may give laws and commandments concerning such physical sins as murder, theft, and adultery; but the primary concern is with eternal principles, eternal truths, eternal things, spiritual things, spiritual ends. God's commandments may at times be concerned with outward symbols, ordinances, rituals, ceremonies; but again the primary concern is with the spiritual or eternal realities which the symbols, rituals, and ordinances are used to express.

God is not unconcerned about temporal things; for it is by means of temporal things that the spirit finds implementation and expression. He does give commandments that have to do with temporal things, and with their use to achieve spiritual, or eternal ends. God is concerned with men's bodies -- the physical, temporal, perishable part of man's personality, as well as with his soul or spirit. God is interested in whether or not men have food, clothing, shelter, and the necessities for physical existence. He is interested in the use men make of their real estate, their stocks, bonds, cash, goods, chattels, and live stock. He is interested in the functions of government as they have to do with man's physical welfare, but to the end that there might also be health and happiness for the spiritual man, which is eternal. The church, too, should be interested in temporal things, not as ends in themselves, but as means to eternal and spiritual ends.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. True worship must be the worship of the spiritual reality back of all its physical representation -- the spiritual reality which is only typified in forms and symbols and ordinances which are temporal. Worship is more than bodily motions or attitudes. It is an attitude of the human spirit -- a recognition of the reality of God, who is spiritual, eternal, indestructible. All of God's laws are but expressions of this eternal and spiritual reality. Therefore, all things to God are spiritual -- are concerned with and dedicated to spiritual or eternal ends.