

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

This sermon script is furnished with
the good wishes of the Reorganized Church
of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 278
Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister
All Rights Reserved

The Sermon: THANKS BE TO GOD

Scripture: I Corinthians 15:49-57.

As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

God is the great Source of all life, all power, all being. He is the Eternal, the Uncreated One. He did not derive his life or his existence from any other source; he himself was and is the Source. All life comes from him. Without him, no life could exist. Anything which curtails, limits, or destroys life is in opposition to God, to his purposes, his principles, his life, and therefore is eternally his enemy.

Very soon after creation, according to our Christian scriptures and theology, man -- in the person of Adam -- chose a course of action which brought death to him and to all his posterity. Life can be preserved and enjoyed only by those who are obedient to the laws and principles of life, which are the laws and principles of God. Disobedience to such principles brings death. This is inevitable. It is the way the universe is built and operated. Sin, or disobedience of the laws of life, always brings death.

Death is an enemy, both to God and to man. It is an enemy to God, because temporarily at least, it frustrates God's plans and purposes by destroying man's life -- the life of the physical body. It separates body and spirit, and thereby makes each ineffective without the other. The body without the spirit is dead; the Spirit without the body is at least partly helpless because it lacks implementation.

Spirit without body is like electricity without a motor; the power is there, but it is ineffective. And death is an enemy because it separates man from God. Corruption and mortality cannot dwell in the presence of immortality and incorruption; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Jesus came to overcome and destroy death, the enemy of both God and man. He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." In order to do this, he took upon him the heritage of Adam -- a human body which was as truly human as yours or mine, which knew all the appetites and hungers, all the pains and pleasures, all the temptations and triumphs of human flesh. Yet he lived always by the law of life; he was without sin.

Jesus died, as you and I shall some day die. Because he was without sin, he owed no debt to sin; he could not be held by death and the grave. He rose again, by the creative power of the endless life that was in him, in order that by his resurrection he might destroy death -- the great enemy of both God and man. He made death the means of obtaining life, because in death the mortal, the corruptible, is laid aside, and the new body becomes immortal and incorruptible. Obviously we can't have both corruptible and incorruptible bodies at the same time. One must

be laid aside, discarded, in order that we may have the other. Death therefore is not the end, but the way; for fallen man it is one of the necessary prerequisites of immortality.

The resurrection of Jesus which we celebrate each year during the Easter season was not a mere revival, or resuscitation, or re-animation of the old body. The old body was subject to death; it could die. The new body was deathless, immortal, incorruptible. For purposes of testimony and infallible identification, it seems that Jesus' resurrected body bore some of the wounds which had caused the death of the old; but reason tells us that when we receive our new bodies, they will be perfect, without blemish or deformity or disfigurement. Who would wish to receive again exactly the same body which he had laid in the grave, subject to pain, to disease, to deformity or mutilation perhaps, and worst of all, destined again sooner or later only for death?

On the other hand, the resurrection of Jesus was not just the reappearance of a spirit without substance. Resurrection is more than mere survival of the soul or spirit in a vague, shadowy realm, without form or substance. The resurrection of Jesus was a reuniting of his spirit and a perfected, immortal, incorruptible body-- a body which had form, size, shape, location, and substance -- a body which could implement the mind, the power, the will of the spirit. Only when spirit and such a body are inseparably united, never more to suffer death, can man receive a fullness of joy. "The spirit and the body is the soul of man, and the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul."

We are assured in scripture that our resurrected bodies shall be like Christ's -- that when he shall appear we shall be like him -- that our lowly body shall be changed to be like his glorious body by the same power which raised him from the grave. What was Jesus' body like? We do not know or understand all the mystery, but the gospels do give us some pertinent information. Thomas not only saw and recognized the risen Lord, but touched the wounds in hands, feet, and side. He was seen and recognized by the eleven, by Mary Magdalene, and others who bore witness to his resurrection. He walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaeus. He talked with them, and they heard his voice. He broke bread with the disciples in the closed upper room at Jerusalem, and ate. He ate broiled fish and honey-

comb with Peter by the seashore. These are not the marks of a spirit or a phantom. They are the indications of a physical, substantial, tangible body, which made its impress upon the five physical senses of those who associated with him. Yet it was not the same kind of physical body as theirs, for Jesus after his resurrection could appear or disappear at will, and seems to have entered a room which was carefully locked and barred against enemies.

Why should we doubt the possibility of such a resurrection, of such a redemption of the soul? We know something of the mechanics of the transmission of life, but no one knows what life itself is. We do know that life, or spirit, always has power within itself to gather, organize, enliven, and govern matter. The body which you live in today began with the germ of life in one cell, but that life has gathered together and organized all the millions and billions of cells which now constitute your body. That life or spirit determined your shape, your size, your facial and bodily characteristics, the color of hair, skin, and eyes. Why should we doubt or fear that this same life is able, with the help of God's life-giving power, to gather together unto itself and organize and vitalize and control the elements of a new and immortal body-- a body fully and completely suited to the wants, the capacities, and the highest aspirations of the spirit?

The resurrection of the body is the final victory over death and the grave. When mortality becomes immortality, the corruption puts on incorruption, then death is swallowed up in victory -- a final, complete, eternal, and everlasting victory. But we do not have to wait for death and the resurrection to have this victory. We may have it now, if the life which raised Jesus from the grave dwells in us, we may have this victory over sin and over death now. "Thanks be to God, who giveth (present tense) us the victory."

This victory is in no way due to ourselves. It is God's gift, through Christ. Someone has said that the only thing we can contribute to our salvation is our sin, which we relinquish to him. If you would have life, repent; relinquish your sin; obey the principles and ordinances of Christ's gospel; receive his new life. Then you can say with all those who have received the "earnest" of the Spirit, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ."