

SERMON ON THE MOUNT —PART II

(Inaudible) . . . and so today we are down to the part of the sermon that begins on page 224 in our text, the matter of plucking out an offending eye. What I thought we would do in the very nature of things and the nature of the sermon in such, is we will just go ahead and take, this morning, samples out of the sermon. We cannot take all of the headings, of course. We can be at liberty to take and discuss any heading that any of you would like or any phase of it that seems of concern or special interest to you. Unless some of you indicate questions and special interests and concerns as we will go along, I will just begin picking up some of the things in the sermon that as we have already indicated, are in effect text announcements or headline summaries of something that presumptively was more voluminous and extensive when our Lord gave it in the first instance. In each of these instances, as with all of the teachings of Jesus throughout the whole New Testament, what I think our perspective ought to be is number one to see wherein and how any particular teaching that he gives bears record of his divine Sonship. We have already discovered, I think, if you look just a little under the surface when you start analyzing one of his teachings, you discover that some way or other it is certifying that he is the Son of God. It is an additional, re-emphasized, witness of his divinity. This is one perspective that we firmly ought to have in studying anything in the gospel, and the other perspective is to figure out what the doctrinal principle involved is in the particular teachings or in the particular episode that is recited. The world, of course, has a general concept and idea (the sectarian world) that Jesus was devoting himself in large part to ethical principles and so they think of the teachings of Jesus and they think, “Well, he has taught us to be kind and to be loving and to be merciful and to be good,” and this sort of thing, and because they have divergent doctrinal views of their own among themselves, they have scurried away from tying his teachings down to doctrinal matters. They would take the Sermon on the Mount as a typical illustration of his teachings, and they would say, “Well he teaches a lot of glorious ethical principles: high standards of morality; levels of personal conduct to which people might well or properly should obtain in this life.” Obviously this is true; he does teach these high ethical standards of decency and integrity and morality and all the rest. But this is very shallow as far as digging in and finding out what his teachings really mean. When you begin to dig in and learn what they mean, of course they are high ethical principles, but they are something far more than that; they are doctrinal teachings that expound and explain and throw a vision on the principles of salvation that you have to understand to view properly the whole plan of salvation, and to get things in perspective so that you, yourself, live right. The real fact of the matter is that people do not live right in the high sense of the word, because [for instance] they are told to be honest. You do not go out and just say to people--a pagan or a sectarian or something else—“be honest,” and by virtue of that have them get the feeling in their heart that they want to be honest. You do not go out and teach an ethical principle and say, “You have to have love in your heart for your fellow men,” and by virtue of announcing that thing, have a desire come into the hearts of men to have love in their hearts. Now, it helps; there is no question about that. I am not deliberating the matter of teaching ethical principles. But the thing that makes people want to live right and reform their lives is the fact they get a comprehension and an understanding of the doctrines of salvation, and get the realization that, through conformity to these doctrines

they get peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. And, as a consequence, the ethical principles grow *out* of the doctrine. But the doctrine comes first. You learn the doctrines and the overall plan, and then it becomes instinctive to want to conform to a high ethical or moral standard. If you take a common illustration in our day, it would be the Word of Wisdom. You go out and you start preaching to somebody, “Well, you ought to live the Word of Wisdom.” Its negative aspects in particular—this is where we put our emphasis down, and too often or too much perhaps in our teachings. You say, “Look—no tea, coffee, tobacco or liquor. You have got to live by this standard to be in harmony with the Church.” Well, I am not at all objecting to the fact that we say to people, “You have got to live the Word of Wisdom to be totally and completely in harmony with the gospel.” But what I am saying is, that is a poor approach in the real analysis of teaching. Poor in the sense that it does not get people involved in religion. Sure you can show them what the Surgeon General says and what is involved physically in tobacco on the body and the lungs. But the thing that causes people to want to live the Word of Wisdom is that they get a testimony of the gospel and they understand the doctrines of salvation and begin to get a vision of the fact that they have to conform to a certain plan in order to perfect their lives, and as a consequence it becomes automatic to live the Word of Wisdom. You say to somebody, “Oh, here is a principle of tithing—you ought to pay your tithing for such and such reason.” Well, that is fine as far as it goes. But the thing that makes people have a desire to pay tithing and a determination to pay tithing is because they understand the doctrine. They understand its relationship to salvation and they get the overall concept, and they want to be saved. Now, this means, as I say, that ethical principles and high standards of conduct *come out* of a knowledge of the plan of salvation. We have a real difficulty in the Church in our day. We grew up in the Church and so we do not learn the doctrines of salvation. We just assume that they are true without any particular knowledge of them. Our ancestors did not do this. They learned them because they were coming out of the world and they had the contrast. And so we are tending to do what maybe we should not do—I am sure we should not do: laying more emphasis on ethical and moral principles as such, with the assumption that everybody knows the doctrine, which is not true. Everybody does not know the doctrine. Somebody stands up in class in Church and says, “Well, we are experts on the gospel. We don’t need to talk about the doctrines of the gospel; let’s invite a speaker in to tell us about Algeria or something else.” All this does is indicate that this fellow who makes the statement is the farthest thing from an expert on the gospel, or he would know that the generality of us do not begin to know what we ought about the gospel.

Well, I make this little introductory statement with the hope—to drive home the point—that when we study the Sermon on the Mount, or when we study any of Jesus’ teachings, our perspective ought to be: dip beneath the surface and find out what doctrine he is teaching. Dip beneath the surface and find out wherein and how this teaching or this miracle or this act is a witness of his divine Sonship. And out of the testimony and the doctrine, thus get an expanded knowledge of the plan of salvation and as a consequence the ethical principles will come almost by instinct. They will just come and there will not be any argument or debate. You will not have to convince anybody that they have to live the Word of Wisdom or that they have to pay their tithing if they have learned the

doctrine involved and know the relationship of those things to salvation. The acts will just cane automatically.

Now, we will do a little of this this morning, but it is a perspective that we ought to have in all things, I think. Well, let us start and just take one little look at [page] 224 and what it means to pluck out an offending eye. Where I want to call your attention to here is just simply the improvement that the Inspired Version has made in this account. Quite plainly, it is the right thing to say, “If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, but it is quite another thing to figure out what that means. The Inspired Version helps us out.

Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart, [now that is the sin of a leper, or adultery; for instance, the previous heading] for it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell. [And that happens also to be the Third Nephi account.]

Therefore, if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out . . . (Inspired Version, Matthew 5:31-32; emphasis added.)

Now look down at verse 34. And this is not in Third Nephi. This makes the Matthew Inspired Version account an improvement.

And now this I speak, a parable concerning your sins; wherefore, cast from you, that you may not be hewn down and cast into the fire. (Inspired Version, Matthew 5:34.)

You see, if all you have is the King James Version, you would be pretty fortunate to come up with the conclusion that what he really meant by this graphic sin, “If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out; if thy hand offend thee, cut it off”—what he really meant by it was, cast your sins from you so that you will be free. Now, what we do in common conversation is just what I put in the commentary here . . . look at the bottom of the page:

We refer to someone as having a lying *tongue*, meaning he is a liar. We speak of “*hands* that shed innocent blood,” *hearts* that devise “wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief” . . . *eyes* guilty of lust . . . , and so [on]. (*New Testament Commentary*, pp. 224-225.)

He is doing what we have been talking about now, He is using a symbolism among a people who are symbolically inclined to indicate how to get rid of your . . . (inaudible) . . . or the fact that you *should* get rid of your sins. Pluck out your eye, if, figuratively speaking, you are getting lust into your body, into your heart, because of what you see. Cut off your feet if they be feet, figuratively speaking, that be swift to run to mischief and so on.

Take the next one, this matter of Jesus abolishing the law of oaths [page 225]. And on that, let me just make a little comment. I am not sure that I really know everything that is

involved in oaths. Now, there is not any question that oaths are abolished. But on the other hand, oaths are still used. We come to a little bit of a problem here. The Lord says they are over with and yet there are some in the making with some other scriptures—there are instances of them in the Christian dispensation, so-called, where they are not wholly improper. Now, this is quite a thing—not so much to us but to these Jews. They had a system of taking oaths and when they took an oath, and were a righteous people and did it by the authority of the Priesthood and were firm in what they did, it meant that heaven and earth would pass away as far as they were concerned and they would not deviate from what they said. This was in the gospel, not in the Mosaic law. Abraham was taking oaths before Moses. Nephi was taking oaths in his ministry as part of the gospel. And it was a way of saying something with absolute certainty so that if somebody took an oath on a point, this oath was so firm that nobody *ever* questioned what was said. Nephi took an oath and he said, “As I live and as the Lord liveth, I will do such and such.” Now, that just ended it. Nephi either did that or he died. This was so ingrained in them that if they swore by an oath, that was the final end to all controversy. Well, in Jesus’ day this had degenerated. It had degenerated to the point that the whole Jewish nation was in a social circumstance where everything they said could be assumed to be false unless they swore it by an oath! This is a total perversion. They were not perturbed with telling untruths; the only thing they were perturbed with was if they happened to swear it by an oath. A wholly apostate version of taking oaths. In that kind of a setting and in that climate, Jesus comes along and he abolishes oaths. “It has been said by them of old, such and such. I, Jesus, now edit Jehovah” (the concept we had yesterday) “and I say, no more oaths. Your conversation is yea, yea and nay, nay.” Well now, the fact of the matter is, that is a higher standard, in a manner of speaking, than oaths is, because if everybody met this standard of your conversation just being such and such without an oath, you would raise all conversation to the same level that this fallen conversation involving oaths previously was on, which would mean that every word that anybody said could be assumed to be true just as absolutely and just as certainly as though he had sworn it with an oath. Sure, this is a higher standard. We have not by any means met it, but the gospel is intending to take us up to that higher standard of things that is more in these dispensations, Christ’s and ours, in a manner of speaking, than they ever had in any other previous dispensation.

Comment: Except in court, presumably we will not tell the truth unless we swear on the Bible.

BRM: Sure, and they have patterned this after what is there, and so we take oaths. But all our constitutional documents will say the people have to *swear or affirm*, and this is in them because of what Jesus said, and because there are some churches—notably the clergy who decided to take this literally and not swear under oath . . . (inaudible) . . . and so they started the conscience that are familiar to affirm . . . (inaudible) . . . but we take oaths in court.

Comment: Would we be better to follow the example President Joseph F. Smith said in the . . . (inaudible) . . . case when he affirmed and refused to swear?

BRM: I had forgotten that he did that. I overlooked that. That was it?

Comment: Yes.

BRM: Well, maybe all right.

Comment: Have we ever had any counsel that we were better off to do that?

BRM: No, we have not. Unless that single incident as an instance becomes a pattern for us. I am not aware of any counsel we have ever had, and the fact is that it is our practice, as far as I know it, the practice of everybody to swear an oath when they get in court. Now, there is one thing about this (so I do not know any answer to that, other than that) that is extremely interesting to us, and that is that though God has said *men* should quit swearing oaths, He has not quit. He still does it. Now, you would think . . . (inaudible) . . . well, it is the word of God, and so he does not need to swear an oath to make it sound true. But the fact of the matter is, he keeps swearing oaths. And I think this is pretty good. And in order to understand the significance of him swearing oaths, you have to look back at this whole history from Adam to Christ, of people swearing oaths and conforming to them. The fact that there is that historical setting and that God himself now swears an oath, adds so much impact to what he says, that for people who understand the matter of oath-taking, it just drills into the soul the truth of what he is saying. Paul in Hebrews talks about God swearing an oath in some instances in reference to Christ. But here is a practical one in latter-day revelation. The Lord could give a revelation and he would say, “Thus saith the Lord: the Book of Mormon is true.” You could not get a more plain . . . (inaudible) . . . and you could not get better evidence or testimony than the voice of God that the Book of Mormon is true. And yet he did not do it that way. He took an oath on the subject, and when he took an oath, the people who understand the concept of oath-taking—the language that he used just sinks into the soul immeasurably deeper and with much greater surety than the mere statement, “Thus saith the Lord: the Book of Mormon is true.” So what he does is this: he is talking about Joseph Smith. He says, “He has translated the Book.” Then He takes the oath. He says, “And as your Lord and your God liveth, it is true.” Now, you say what you like about the fact that everybody has to speak by a high standard, it is true, and the mere fact that he said it makes it true. And God himself could do that, perhaps. But when he comes along and talks about the Book of Mormon and puts it in the form of an oath and says, “As your Lord and your God liveth, it is true,” you find Deity defining the most solemn language known to humankind to assert a truth, and he has put an emphasis on it that no other conceivable language could have put on. So there is some great, tremendous merit in this business. But you do not catch the significance of what is involved unless you understand this system of oath taking that prevails in gospel dispensations from Adam to Christ, but which is not supposed to prevail now and yet, like a lot of things, we do not quite meet the high standard and some people—and I think . . . (inaudible) . . . by the Spirit will take an oath on something. This is the same thing that is in Section 8 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Lord could have just said, and he *did* say, “Ask and ye shall receive; knock and it shall be opened unto you.” But when he comes to this eighth section, he wants to drill into the hearts of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery so they will really get in and ask, they will know, he says, “Assuredly as your Lord and your God liveth who is your

Redeemer, if you ask in faith you will get such and such.” And that sinks the concept into the heart of the man, or should, more than any other approach could.

Well, this law of oaths is an interesting thing. Unless there is some comment about it or some question, let us go on and pick up some other things.

Comment: Is this the same oath that is supposed to be in particular in those things not of the Church . . . (inaudible) . . . temple covenants and such?

BRM: No. We talk about oaths, and what we mean is, somebody says, “I swear in the Lord’s name such and such.” That is what the Jews were saying. “I swear by the temple,” or by the city of the great king; taking an oath that what they then said was true. And this was Peter’s problem. One of the serious things that Peter did in all his life was that night when the maid spoke to him, “... thy speech betrayeth thee. Thou art one of them; thou also wast with him.” (see Matthew 26:69-73.) Jesus had said to him, “Before the cock crows you will deny me three times.” The record says Peter swore and said “I am not—I do not know the man.” Well, we read this and it sounds like Peter said, “You blank blank blank, I don’t know who he is!” (Laughter.) This is not at all; this is not profanity. No profanity at all in Peter’s swearing. What Peter did was take an oath! Peter said in effect (I do not know what language he used because it is not there), “As the Lord liveth, I do not know the man.” He said the most solemn thing that it was possible for a Jew to say, and he did not tell the truth. This makes that kind of a lie as serious a lie as you could get. This was . . . (inaudible) . . . in his lie, but of course he was doing it—he did that because up to then he did not have the companionship of the Spirit. At the moment he did not have one of those flashes of inspiration that had been his habit from time to time to get.

Comment: Is it not the oath Christ is calling—it seems he may be calling for an implied oath, now, to his disciples and not to swear by these things because now Christ is their shepherd and in effect their own discipleship is supposed to underscore their veracity.

BRM: Yes, I think maybe that is good insight. In effect he is saying, the veracity that attends oath-taking should now be imbued in the whole system of religion so *that* every word that you speak is as acceptable to any hearer as though you had said, “As the Lord liveth, it is true.” It is a broadening and it is a raising of the ethical standard by which men live, and yet . . . here is an illustration to what I was saying, how totally useless it would be to teach a person to take an oath saying he ought to take an oath and have it mean anything to them as to ethical things unless they understood the doctrine that was involved that God authorized the taking of oaths and that there was such a penalty backed by favor.

Comment: In Mosiah 18 remember it does say we stand as a witness of him by the fact that we do mourn with those that mourn, and so forth.

BRM: Yes, we do. And so our lives bear—and our beliefs bear witness. Well . . . (inaudible) . . . do you want to raise . . . (inaudible)?

Comment: It just seems to me that the negative thing about oath-taking there is that it does not say much for a person for liability when you have to say, in order to depend on my word, go to the Lord, go to the Bible, or somebody else.

BRM: This is the obvious effect when people begin to apostatize and lose the spirit of religion, in consequence of which the degenerate circumstance . . . (inaudible). But when properly applied in Abraham's life and in Nephi's life, it was ideal. What the Jews did—they took an oath but they would use their money in some religious purpose and because they had taken this, then they felt themselves free from supporting their parents according to the law of God and as a consequence. They got the degenerate practice of not taking care of their parents, and that is what Jesus said, they take this oath saying “it is corban, it is a gift; I swear that it is going to so and so” and therefore they were free from an obligation. So they had begun to use oath-taking as a means of avoiding their obligations to take care of their parents, to avoid their obligations to take care of their . . . (inaudible) . . . to tell the truth in other instances, and so on.

Well, that really maybe does not deserve that much attention, but let us dip down and take a few more. Look on [page] 231; I think we ought to point out one thing about this eternal perfection. Jesus said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). The Inspired Version makes it: “Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” Third Nephi, a new concept: “. . . I would that ye should be perfect even as *I*, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” (3 Nephi 12:48; emphasis added.) There would be two ways to interpret that Matthew 5:48. One way would be to say, “Well, he wants us to be perfect in our sphere as He is perfect in His.” This is not an uncommon thing for people to say, but it has the misfortune of not being what he meant. One reason that we positively know what he meant is because of this Third Nephi account! Now, he did not . . . (inaudible) . . . Christ was perfect when he said this thing in Matthew. He was without sin; there was no sin. He had said on numerous occasions in his conversations with the Jews that there was no fault in him; he had to have been . . . (inaudible) . . . to tell them that he was perfect in the sense that he was living the law in this life. And yet he does not say, “Be perfect as I am perfect” because he is not talking about that in the Sermon on the Mount. What he is talking about is eternal perfection. This is a verse that says as God now is, man may become. It does not say that in words, but that is the thought concept. That is the objective and the goal that is involved. And hence, after the resurrection he, having received all power himself in heaven and on earth, now he is in a position to add himself to the Father as one who is perfect, and he can say, “*I* or your Father,” because *now* he has eternal perfection in the sense that in his glorified body is resident everything, is personified everything. Not the union in body and spirit, this is no perfection in the ultimate sense in which this speaks and yet perfection is used in some other way in the course.

Well, without so much as comment, let us go on from that. But that is a concept that we ought to have and we ought to know what it really means, and here again we are talking about doctrine. We just finished a few weeks ago, a seminar for the new mission presidents. And nearly all the Brethren from the Twelve and the Presidency all were there

. . . (inaudible) . . . were talking to them at one time or another. And when they called on President Smith, he came up out of a little premeditation and he just started to talk like the Brethren sometimes do, and this is what he said: he spent about 15 minutes telling these mission presidents and their wives, with all the Brethren present, what this meant [Matthew 5:48]; that it is *eternal* perfection. It is not in this life; it is the ultimate goal of knowing all things, and having all power and all dominion, like gods have. That is what Jesus is teaching. Somebody raised their hand.

Comment: Yes, I . . . (inaudible) . . . said something you said at first—in my writing here, you got just a little bit ahead of me, and I was going to ask you if what you said was . . . (inaudible) . . . what I thought you said was what you said, but now you just answered it.

BRM: What I thought I said was what I hope I said.

Comment: (Inaudible) . . . you said it was possible to become perfect in this life, and then you differentiate between mortal perfection and immortal perfection and how

BRM: Yes, between finite and infinite, or something. It is possible to be perfect in this life, . . . (inaudible).

Comment: Are you going to take up that when you talk about callings and elections made sure?

BRM: No, I really was not. But I do not know anything more than what is in *Mormon Doctrine* on this anyway. But there is a usage of the word “perfection” that applies to us, and we can be perfect in our day and *in our situation*, and this is what it says about Noah and about Hyrum Smith and others in the revelations. And that is a relative thing, and all the Saints can be perfect in that relative sense. Now, this does not mean that they are perfect like we ordinarily use the word. Paul writes to somebody and he says, “Now I am talking to you who are perfect.” Well, they are perfect as to the latest of the world, but they are not perfect in the ultimate sense that they never think an improper thought or do an improper thing. But people who get this finite perfection are the ones who go on to infinite—infinite perfection.

Comment: Could I ask a question back on the oath . . . (inaudible)?

BRM: Sure.

Comment: Matthew 5:31 and 32 where it speaks here of the putting away of a wife . . . (inaudible) . . . get married including the person that you marry. Could you comment on that in relationship to the practice of the Church today?

BRM: Well, yes. Now, I did not include a discussion on that in the Sermon on the Mount analysis that I was making (we are on page 226). With reference to those two verses, I just say “See Matthew 19:3-12.” That Matthew 19 is the occasion where Jesus gave this

sermon about marriage and telling the people not to marry or seemingly telling them . . . (inaudible) . . . the disciples raised a question of whether it was fair for people not to marry and so on, and in the course of that sermon Jesus talked first to the multitude and then in the house, separate, alone, to the disciples. And to the disciples he says a very significant thing that he did not say to the people. He says to them, “this law is not to any except them to whom it is given.” Now what this amounts to is, that these two verses that you mentioned in Matthew are not to any except them to whom they are given. In other words, here is a marriage law that applies under limited time and circumstances and to limited groups, and as it so happens it is not in force today. How do you know it is not in force today?

Comment: The practices of the Church.

BRM: Because of the practice of the Church. You know it is not in force today. If it were, we would have to excommunicate people who married again because they would be living in sin. We do not live by this law of marriage today. The Nephites apparently did, and apparently the little segment of civilization that was in the Church in Jesus’ day had this obligation. There have been all levels of marriage discipline and there are some up here that we live by, and there are some that we live by, and Moses had one lower than we live by. Moses let them do some things that we cannot do. Moses let them put their wives away with a bill of divorce, but we cannot do that. That is abolished as far as we are concerned. Well, someday there will be a higher system of marriage as far as the requirements attending it are concerned, and the marriage discipline that the Lord allows or requires depends upon the social structure and the spiritual talents in the body of the people that are involved. We are living a higher law than Moses, but there are some principles that we do not live. I do not know but I would just really speculate that during the millennium we will have these higher standards. We know what we are doing is all right because the Brethren authorize it. The practice of the Church is the interpretation of the Church. Now this, I suppose, is written down in the analysis in the book of that thing in the 19th chapter of Matthew.

Comment: I do not know whether I should bring this up, but what about the little known discourse of the Prophet on marriage here and the concept of fornication?

BRM: I do not know. How do you know the Prophet said it?

Comment: I do not. That is why I asked you.

BRM: I do not either.

Comment: If . . . (inaudible).

BRM: Well there are some very logical, interesting things in it, I grant you that. And if he said it, which I was going to try and check out and find out if anybody knew if he actually said it . . . (inaudible); if he said it, he was talking theory instead of practice, was he not?

He was talking about an order that we ought to grow into, or that he would like to have had us ascend to something else, I do not know.

Comment: Did not Paul actually uphold Matthew 19 in Corinthians? At that one point there where it says, “Now this is the Lord’s word” (and I think it is verse 10) he gives the same instructions that Christ gave in Matthew 19.

BRM: Well I do not have that in my mind at the moment.

Comment: When he gets divorced—where he tells them not to divorce.

BRM: I do not have that in my mind at the moment, however, let me say this in reference to what Paul said. It is true that you have to understand it. And it is *not* true unless you know what Paul was talking about. He says all these harsh things against marriage. Now I will tell you, I will give you a little hint; you do a little research and you see if this does not work out this way; this is how I think it worked out. Paul is talking about marriage. He begins his discourse in effect by saying, “You wrote me a question and you presented me a problem. And now I am going to tell you the answer to the problem.” And our difficulty is, *we do not know* what question he was answering. All we know is the answer that he gave! And if we knew the question that he was answering, it would be very enlightening. We would know why Paul was saying derogatory things about marriage, saying do not get married. “Don’t marry,” he says. Well, as a matter of fact, I think I have figured out what question was asked of him. And Paul gave exactly the same answer the Brethren would give today if that question were asked. There is some conversation about missionary work interwoven with his answer. I think what the question had to be was, “Here are some people who were serving on missions. Shall they get married or shall they not get married?” And the answer is no. You do not get married. You go out and you do your missionary work. But we do not know the question. If we knew the question, the answer would make more sense. So what place we are put in is, to figure out *some question* that could have been answered *so that* the things that he said are in harmony with the gospel standards. And if you figure out that he was talking about some limited situation like missionary work, you do not have any problem with all these things that . . . (inaudible). Now, we are not taking time to read these things and analyze them, but I am just suggesting that there is an avenue of inquiry and approach to you; to figure out a way in which what Paul said is in harmony with the whole gospel. And this of course, is what we everlastingly, always do. You do not look for conflicts and disagreements. You look for some way to establish and show that what every prophet says is in harmony with what every other prophet says. And the fragmentary accounts that we have, we just figure that out.

Well, our time is gone, but now let us just—without discussing them, let us . . . (inaudible) . . . look for in this sermon. On page 233 is our . . . (inaudible) . . . page 233: “Jesus Teaches Men How to Pray.” If there is any . . . oh, I had better not get extravagant, but I feel like playing . . . (inaudible). If there is anything that meets a poor standard in the Church, it is prayer. Latter-day Saints do not know how to pray; particularly in General Conference. We have had some pretty good prayers in all these classes out here; I

have been very pleased in this class and in the other; the prayers I have thought have been appropriate and good, and I think there is a little hope for Israel. There is an awful lot about prayer that is poor in the Church. One of the main things wrong with prayer is, people just recite some words and they do not pray with all the fervor of their souls. They do not put their whole heart into it and believe what they are saying. Another thing that is wrong with it is that they do not often—too often in their public prayers—they do not concern themselves with what is involved in the meeting. They go to a sacrament meeting and they pray for the welfare plan. You talk about what is *involved* in the meeting. They get up in General Conference and they pray for everything. There is only thing that is universal for all prayers under all times and under all circumstances, and that is to petition to give the Spirit of the Lord to somebody. Well, prayer: we could talk for two or three hours about that, but there are some avenues open to investigation and approach to the subject here, by Jesus, indicating what people ought to pray for.

Now that next one, condemning of ostentatious fasting . . . (inaudible).

Comment: Brother McConkie? Can I ask you just one quick question? What is your opinion on Melvin J. Ballard's comment that we should not say in our prayers, "We come before you"? He says the only time you can really, truly say that is when you are in the robes of the priesthood in the temple.

BRM: I was not even aware that he said that; I am not familiar with that quotation. Now that . . . (inaudible) . . . that is common practice in the Church, "Our Father who art in Heaven, we come before thee"—I cannot see really why it is that you do not come before Him in a sense in prayer; I can see a higher sense in which you come before Him in the temple. We get a lot of little finicky things about prayer that are not too important. Somebody says, "Oh, you don't pray in prayer for a portion of the Spirit; you pray for the Spirit." Well, you know, I agree with that; I think that if you are going to pray you ought to pray for the Spirit and you could not pray for a portion of the Spirit, *but on the other hand*, the Book of Mormon prophets prayed for a portion of the Spirit, so who are we to say that you are not doing quite what you should to pray for a portion of the spirit? I think maybe one of our problems with prayer is, that we get bound down with some little technical things instead of getting into our hearts to the true feeling of prayer, so that we put our whole soul into it. I do not know. Prayer is more than the words; it is actually talking with the Lord.

Well, spiritual light and treasures in heaven . . . (inaudible) . . . these all, of course are the reading assignments. Page 240, "Apostles to Forsake All in Missionary Cause" . . . (inaudible) . . . let us just look at the Inspired Version enough to catch the vision of what is involved here. This Inspired Version is marvelous, and Third Nephi has the same thought content, but not the same amplified presentation of it. Our only point of emphasis here under our . . . (inaudible) . . . is that Jesus is not saying in this "Take no thought for your life or what ye shall wear or what ye shall drink." He is not saying it to the Church, but he is saying it to the disciples—or the Twelve. Look over here in the Inspired Version:

And, again, I say unto you, go ye into the world, [go out on missions] and care not for the world; for the world will hate you, and will persecute you, and will turn you out of your their synagogues.

Nevertheless, ye shall go forth from house to house, teaching the people; and I will go before you.

And your heavenly Father will provide for you, whatsoever things ye need for food, what ye shall eat; and for raiment, what ye shall wear or put on.

Behold the fowls of the air, . . . (Inspired Version, Matthew 6:25-29.)

You see what it does? It totally limits this concept of “take no thought for tomorrow” to the missionary cause and does not send it out as counsel for the whole Church. [Page] 244. Here is one that deserves a lot of consideration; a whole hour on it almost, to our nonsense that Jesus taught “judge not that ye be not judged.” We . . . (inaudible) . . . means condemn not that ye be not condemned. The real teaching of this doctrine is, judge righteous judgment. Do not condemn people unnecessarily or unwisely lest you be condemned. If I were you, I would denote how the insertions are there in the Inspired Version.

Page 246: “Only [the] Saints Can Receive [the] Mysteries of [the] Kingdom.” This is an applied concept here: give not that which is holy unto the dogs, but do give that which is holy to the Saints. It is the Saints that are entitled to have it, and not the world. You can get some analysis out of that. The remaining two headings in the Sermon on the Mount: this one about prophets . . . (inaudible) . . . or rather strait gate which is involved, of which you are undoubtedly familiar . . . but this one about false prophets is about obedience. (Inaudible) . . . from a lesson standpoint, is worth a whole day to talk about. Here again, doctrinally speaking it is extremely interesting, but really involved. The sectarians the world over say “Oh ho, a prophet—Joe Smith. Beware of false prophets.” They quote this. Well heavens above, all you have to do is have a scintilla of intelligence (laughter) and read a little thought into what Jesus is saying, and what he is saying is, *accept Joseph Smith!* It is just so foolish the way that some of these things are read and used because people do not analyze what is involved. The fact that he says to a people who believed in prophets, “beware of false prophets” is the same thing as saying to them, “accept the true prophets.” He is not condemning prophets that are going to come in the future. He is singling out a portion of those who will come in the future, who are false, and saying, beware of *them*. Not that there are not going to be any prophets, but then he gives the test. There will be two kinds of people in the future. There are going to be those who say “We are prophets,” and some of them are false and some of them are true. “Now look, what I want you to do is beware of these false fellows and accept the true ones, and this is how you are going to know: by their fruits.” This is a glorious, glorious thing, if properly understood; it opens a door. If you *really* want to catch a vision of what this means about beware of false prophets, then what you do is look up the quotation of Joseph Smith that defines what is involved in a prophet, and you get away from this limited, narrow concept that people have that a prophet is foretelling the future, and you

learn that what a prophet is, is a preacher of righteousness who professes to tell the Plan of Life and Salvation to people. So when he says beware of false prophets, he is not saying, beware of Joseph Smith; he is saying beware of Billy Graham. (Laughter.) He is saying beware of *anybody* who presents a system of salvation that is false! Because what a true prophet is, is a man who teaches true principles.

Well, take the perspective that we indicated here now, and no matter what you are doing, figure out the doctrine that is involved. No matter what you are studying, figure out the doctrine that is involved. And no matter what Jesus is saying, figure out *how it adds to the witness* and testimony that He is the Son of God. Now about any of these that we are not discussing but just mentioning that are there, anything we ought to say or any questions that should be brought up?

Comment: What is your reaction to President Stephen L. Richard's . . . (inaudible) . . . thinking that the . . . (inaudible).

BRM: It is in a manner of speaking, is it not? I said yesterday that by teaching or preaching a sermon on the subject of the Articles of Faith, and you name each one and you say a little about it, it is not a sermon on a subject, it is . . . (inaudible) . . . it is a constitution in a sense of the kingdom in that he just went through one subject after another until people just fully understood—described in the overall substantially what the kingdom is about.

Comment: It seems to me that if you take the context of the Book of Mormon, it is much more justifiable than it this in Matthew. You have to go way back to John to get the context of “my church should be one” and how the first principles and ordinances of the gospel should be lived. Now the Book of Mormon says it . . . (inaudible). It says it right there as part of his announcement.

BRM: Well, it is the constitution of the Church in a sense. You would say that same thing about the Articles of Faith; you could say they were the constitution of the Church. I have never happened to say that; I have frequently said the New Testament is the constitutional document of Christianity in the original Church of Christianity. This is certainly the heart and core and center of that.

Well, we will take up next Monday; we will begin and spend one day a week on the matter of parables. Now you see, we are not teaching the Sermon on the Mount except I have relayed portions of it today and its relationship; you make the research. Next time we will take a look at what is involved in parables.