

## THE LORD'S FAMILY

(Discourse below by H. C. Rockwell, 1907 Convention Report, Part II, Page 46.)

Dear Friends: Our theme will be “**The Lord’s Family.**” I trust that all who are assembled here tonight have the feeling that they are meeting together with the members of the Lord’s family, all members of the Heavenly Father’s Family.

As I was coming to the convention from New York City, I noticed in Buffalo a number of large signs announcing there would be a week of special jollification, called “Old Home Week.” The thought came to my mind that if worldly people could get together and have a grand time with acquaintances and neighbors, going over old times and considering the conditions and welfare of one another, how very appropriate it is for the Lord’s people to get together and talk about our home and spiritual interests. I trust we have all taken the position of having left the old Adamic home upon the earthly side and have started on the journey for the new home. We are celebrating a “**New Home Week.**” Some of us have been on the journey for some years and some for a very limited time, but I trust we have continued to make progress on the narrow way and that our hearts are rejoicing continually. We are all members of the Heavenly, Father’s Family. It is a high and wonderful privilege to have been adopted into the Heavenly Father’s Family. It is the oldest family in the world and one that we glory in. Our Heavenly Father has always existed, and our Lord was the first created.

As we come down the ages, we find where noble members of our family have existed, and, as we understand from the Scriptures, have entered into the joys of our Elder Brother and are with the Father.

I trust these convention meetings will be very helpful to us, causing us to consider the welfare of the other members. A great deal of love should be manifested. In the earthly family each looks out for the interests of the others, and if any are weak or crippled in any way, how the loving brothers and sisters look out for the interests of those so afflicted. So with us, some are lame and very weak, requiring special attention, and that is one of the reasons for our coming together—to strengthen and encourage one another, to build one another up in the most holy faith, that we may continue on in our journey which will end in our Heavenly Father’s home.

When thinking of our Father’s house, we think of our Elder Brother, the Lord Jesus. Nineteen centuries ago He told His followers something about that heavenly home and that he was going away to prepare something for the other members. We understand that our Lord, has for the past long centuries been engaged in preparing a place for His Bride, that the members might enter into the joys given Him of glory, honor and immortality.

I look upon this convention as a family reunion. I remember seeing something in the papers not long ago of a reunion of the Smith family and the Smiths from far and near came to have a jubilee. Here is a grand family reunion, and what a wonderful reunion this is; not of the Smith family, but of the Lord's family from various parts of the United States and Canada. This is a glorious foretaste of that family reunion that will be when all are gathered together beyond the "Vail". The Smith family had a grand feast and many wonderful things to talk about; so there will be in that **great family reunion**. Think of the songs that will go up from them all. Think of meeting our Saviour as our Elder Brother, and think of looking into the face of our Heavenly Father, whom no mortal man has seen, neither can see! Think of meeting Paul and Peter and John and all the other faithful brethren! Think of what a grand banquet will occur—the marriage supper of the lamb, and think of it enduring for a thousand years! Think of the song of Moses and the Lamb as it will then be sung! It is a time to look forward to.

And now dear friends, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, as members of this family of God, it is our blessed privilege to have this glorious prospect placed before us, and when the whole family has passed beyond the "Vail," what will it mean? Will it mean that the members will be engaged in pleasure on their own behalf? No. One of the chief pleasures will be that they will have the privilege of dispensing the Heavenly Father's blessings to all the families of the earth, so that by the end of the thousand years, all the families of the whole groaning creation will be adopted into God's family, that is, all the willing and obedient; just as at the present time, those that have the ears to hear and the eyes to see the things that the Father has to bestow, who will accept the conditions that He lays down. So we understand that in a somewhat similar manner, those that will accept, during the Millennial Age, the conditions that are laid down, enter into the membership of the Lord's family.

As in the earthly family there are different degrees of relationship, such as the inner circle, consisting of the brothers and sisters, then the brothers-in-law, etc., and various other degrees. So I would understand in the divine family, the spiritual members, the divine, highly exalted ones will be the inner circle. Then comes the great multitude, and we might say they come next in relationship to the Lord. These would include not only the great company but also the angels. Then come the ancient worthies, those who by their faith and obedience attained unto a better resurrection. Then outside of those will come the world of mankind; they will be on the human plane, and they will be the sons of God in the same sense that Adam was a son of God. During the thousand years reign of our dear Redeemer and His Bride, they will represent the Father, but at the end of the thousand years, we read that the Lord will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father that God may be all in all; then the divine family will be completed and throughout the ages of eternity, there will be universal joy, peace and happiness. As we understand the Father's purpose, there will be nothing to cause sorrow or suffering, but all things shall be made

new. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall praise our God from whom all blessings flow.

Now then, dear friends, the journey which we are called upon to make is a narrow, difficult way, leading to our Heavenly Father's home. Comparatively few during this Gospel Age appreciate the privileges and relationship that are yours and mine to enjoy.

When I think that we can by faith look up into the Heavenly Father's face and appreciate the fact that we are His children, begotten of His Holy Spirit, and that all the experiences of life are designed to work out our eternal welfare; when I think of all the mighty power and wisdom that the Father has exerted in our behalf, and that nothing can injure or harm us, it makes me very thankful. It seems to me, dear friends, that among those that have knowledge of Present Truth, there are some who fail to appreciate the glorious privilege and relationship that our Lord's people have been invited to attain to. Some think the Father is a long way off and that it takes a long time to reach Him. Some also have the thought that we cannot approach without a mediator. I trust that the most of us have come to appreciate the fact that we can enjoy the same relationship to God as our Father that our Lord enjoyed after His consecration and baptism. We do not need any mediator or go-between; because we are entirely at-one with the Father—**we are His children.** Suppose an earthly parent should arrange for his children to go to an outside person before the child could come to him. It would be an unreasonable proposition. So it is with the relationship we enjoy with our heavenly Father. We are invited to come boldly to the throne of grace in every time of need, receiving grace and strength to help and sustain us.

Our dear Redeemer had something to say about the mansions in our Father's house. He said there were many mansions but that He went to prepare a place for us. We have some conception of these as we look into the Scriptures, but we have a very limited conception of what our Redeemer went to prepare. We have some conception of the angelic plane upon which the angels exist. The Scriptures have quite a little to say about the power, ability and glory of the angels. It is intimated in the Scriptures that they are a little above men. We have some conception of what a perfect man would be like, but not a full conception, because the race has degenerated during the past six thousand years. All are now very imperfect. Now then, our heavenly Lord, having all power and authority in heaven, has been engaged in preparing a place for those that will be associated with Him. If an earthly man with millions of dollars at his command and all the time he wanted could arrange a beautiful mansion with beautiful grounds around, etc., how much more can our heavenly Lord, with all power and 19 centuries at his command, prepare a glorious place for His Bride. That is the home toward which we are journeying, and I trust it will be your privilege and mine to enter into that home, that we may enjoy it throughout all eternity and that we may look into the face of our Heavenly Father, and all through eternity be expressing praise to our God.

Now while we have this glorious hope before us, we also have present with us the stern reality that while not of the world, we are still in it. Let the desire of our hearts be to promote the interests of the other members of our family, so that in dealing with the other members of the family, we will remember that the Heavenly Father loves them and esteems them as His children, and as such, we have a great deal of responsibility toward them, as fellow members of the divine family. We should be very careful of the welfare of the members of Present Truth, adopted into the heavenly family. Sometimes the members of the earthly family try one another severely because of certain traits of character differing from the other members of the family. And so, we find it is with the Lord's family. He is not selecting the noblest and best of the race to constitute His family, but the opposite. He called the weak, the poor, and the despised according to the flesh and not many mighty, wise or noble. But the Lord sees that this is the best arrangement, and these are rich in faith. Thus we can see that because of inherent weaknesses and imperfections there may be trials among the members of the Lord's family before all are perfected. So, it will be necessary for us to exercise patience, we will need to be kind and considerate, and we should look upon the other members of the Body as does the Heavenly Father. He does not look upon the flesh, but upon the heart, the new mind. And dear friends, I sometimes think our greatest trials come from those with whom we are associated in Present Truth. We look upon the world as absolutely helpless in the hands of the god of this world—Satan. It is foolish for any natural man, in his own strength and ability to think that he can resist the influences of evil that surround him on every hand. As an illustration of this we sometimes read about men who have been placed in positions of trust, who for years have been faithful, but suddenly they fall away, they become dishonest. But, with the Church our Heavenly Father has arranged that His grace is sufficient, and that through His strength, we can overcome the evil influences of this present time. The world is completely helpless in the hands of the adversary, and all are possessed with the spirit of an unsound mind. It is only those that have the spirit of a sound mind that can overcome. We look upon the world as being in an insane condition, and they are in a position where they cannot appreciate completely the things that are right or reasonable. So if some of them tried to do us injury, we should not try to retaliate, but should look upon them with pity. But when we look upon the members of the Father's family, we should expect them to be filled with the spirit of love and fellowship at all times. Let us try to think that they are, and if they do those things that are contrary to the spirit, let us remember that it is part of the old man, part of the flesh. Then again, let us remember that if we have the disposition to retaliate, we may rest assured that the adversary will keep us busy. Our time is to be devoted to doing the Lord's will, we are not to go about seeking to set ourselves right. For my part, I would rather leave that to the Lord. When we have given all things, we have given our life, our all, which includes our good name, our reputation, all that we have. Therefore, knowing that He loves us, He will look out for our interest and our welfare; we need not be specially concerned about being set right with others. When we are experiencing hard

knocks from others we may look upon these as blessings in disguise. I remember a picture representing a strength testing machine with a gauge standing up for 12 or 15 feet. There was a little block of wood at the bottom of the machine and to this little block is attached the image of a little man. The strength test consisted in that a large mallet is used to strike a peg and send the block of wood up. The higher it goes, the greater strength is tested. The man with the mallet was trying to send the wooden man high up in the air. Over the machine was written, "Every knock is a boost." It means that if we are rightly exercised by our trials, every knock will be a boost in character building, and in the Lord's favor which is correct from a Scriptural standpoint. The harder the knock the higher the boost! Blessed are ye when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, etc. Matt. 5:11, 12. So we see the principle of this, as we experience these hard knocks and the little taps, if we are rightly exercised by them, it means that we are developing and that we will be found worthy to enter into that glorious home that is reserved for the people of God.

I sometimes think of the development of Christian character in the nature of putting up a building. In the city of New York, they are engaged in erecting that class of buildings known as skyscrapers—so tall that they seem to scrape against the sky, forty and fifty stories high. First of all, there is the cost to be considered. So with us, we are exhorted to count the cost, etc. We found what the cost was, we were to give our all, all our time, energy, talents, etc. Then after considering the cost, the work began. We must be properly fastened to the foundation. In putting up these big buildings, it may be necessary to devote weeks and months in removing the dirt and debris, until they reach the solid rock. So when we consider the various opinions, theories and doctrines of our day, such as evolution ideas and higher criticisms we find there is a great deal of rubbish and debris to get rid of before we get down to the true foundation, the solid rock, Christ Jesus, a ransom for all. Then it is necessary to build upon the foundation. I like to think of our building as having seven stories, seven being the symbol of completeness. It is true there are eight things mentioned by the Apostle—2 Peter 1:5-7. We are to add to our faith fortitude, to fortitude knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control patience to patience piety, to piety brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love. I like to think of faith as the steel frame and cross beams that run throughout the building, and that the other seven attributes are the seven stories that are attached to the steel super-structure, and the height of the building will depend upon the height of the stories. Some may have a little virtue or fortitude, but a great deal of patience. They might have seven feet of one and forty of the other, so to speak. Suppose they were each alike, say 40 feet each, what a tall building we would have; but, on the contrary, if we had only a few feet of each, we would have only a small building.

Again the building material is not of wood, hay and stubble—traditional errors—which are used by so many Christian people of the present time, but it is the gold, silver and precious stones, the divine truths of the Word of the Lord. What a glorious sight it will be

from the divine standpoint, when these character structures that are being developed at the present time will be completed. Again many of these buildings are fire proof. The thought is that there are 144,000 Christians, members of the divine family, who are engaged in developing the skyscrapers of Christian character structures. Think of it when 144,000 of these structures are gathered together. In Revelation these are described as the New Jerusalem, the glorious city, etc. This glorious city is to come down from God, to be established upon this earth, and the blessings are to flow out to all the families of the earth represented by the rivers of the water of life. Rev. 22:1, 2.

We understand from the Scriptures that the closing days of the last members of the body of Christ, the members of the Lord's family upon this earth, are to be of special trial, and the Scriptures say, "Who shall be able to stand?" It is those who have put up these high character structures. You will notice that the gold, silver, etc., are fire-proof materials. A great fire and earthquake are coming, and only those buildings which are fire-proof and which have been erected according to the specifications outlined in our heavenly Father's Word, is there any hope of their standing.

With this thought in mind, let us put forth renewed effort to erect a building that will be found worthy to have a place in that City, the New Jerusalem.

Dear friends, may we be permitted to enter into that last family reunion, with our Redeemer and Heavenly Father. May it be yours and my great privilege to be associated together with our Lord, to sing the songs of praise and thanksgiving in that time.