

D10 DAVIS, John. *Pregethu i'r ysbrydion yn ngharchar, a bedyddio dros y meirw.* (Preaching to the spirits in prison, and baptism for the dead.) *Merthyr Tydfil: Printed and for sale by J. Davis, Georgetown, 1850.*

8 pp. 17 cm. *Welsh Mormon Writings* 37.

By using biblical phrases in the title of this publication, John Davis followed the procedure used for his previous two pamphlets (D8 and D9). On the title page, three passages of scripture are quoted: 1 Peter 3:18–20, 1 Peter 4:6, and 1 Corinthians 15:29–30. The seven pages of text are basically an interpretation of these verses according to Church doctrine.

Prior to the publication of *Welsh Mormon Writings* only the 1851 edition of this pamphlet was known. Several years afterwards a copy of the 1850 edition surfaced in a secondhand bookshop in Salt Lake City, Utah. The contents of the two are identical except for two words added at the beginning of page [2] of the 1851 edition: "Observations on." Also the typesetting of the eight-line poem of the 1850 edition was rearranged into sixteen lines in the later edition.

PREACHING  
TO THE  
SPIRITS IN PRISON,  
AND  
BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD.

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“FOR Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, &c.”—1 PETER III, 18—20.

“For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”—1 PETER IV, 6.

“Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”—1 COR. XV, 29, 30.

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BY JOHN DAVIS, MERTHYR.

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MERTHYR TYDFIL:

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FOR SALE ALSO

By the Saints in general, and many Booksellers,  
through the South and the North.

1850.

## PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON, AND BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD.

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SINCE denominations of the age have manifested their views on the two above topics, it would not be unprofitable, perhaps, for us, in the name of the Latter-day Saints, to do so also, regardless of the persecution that will come about as a result. We consider that the Welsh are sufficiently mature, by now, to receive our views about preaching to the spirits in prison, together with baptism for the dead. Many opinions have been offered, and have been received; but very little light, until now, has been shed on the above dark topics.

Before placing the preaching and the baptism under scrutiny, let us read that which Isaiah says (lxi, 1, 2), "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the *prison*\* to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." Furthermore, we can also read the following quotations:—Psalm cxlii, 7—"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." Psalm lxxix, 11,— "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee: according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die." Psalm cii, 18—22,— "This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created shall praise the

\*One can understand, to some extent, what kind of place is the PRISON, or hell, by reading the parable of the rich man, in Luke XVI, 19—31.

Lord. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed unto death; to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord." Isaiah xlii, 7,—“To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” Isaiah xxiv, 22,—“And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.”

Now, after Jesus Christ came to the world, according to that which was prophesied about him, his message related to many classes of men, and his main purpose was to bring *all* of them from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God. Although men vary in their circumstances, yet he had but one gate or door, through which all, from every place, could come into the kingdom of light; and to show that, he said, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” It is not possible for anyone to climb in any other way, else he is counted a thief or a robber. At the time Jesus spoke these things, he knew that his work was to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the brokenhearted, “to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the *opening of the prison* to them that are *bound*.” He knew that there were spirits in prison from the time of Noah, for their disobedience, and he knew that he needed to proclaim to them the opening of the prison. Every prisoner is a sinner, but that does not mean that he cannot pay his debt, unless his sin is unpardonable; but if his sin is unpardonable, he will not be forgiven in this world or in the world to come. (Matt. xii, 32.) We know of no one who has proved that the antediluvians committed the unpardonable sin, and that it will be impossible to have their sins “blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts iii, 19). That forgiveness will be given in the world to come, has been determined by Jesus Christ, in clear and understandable words, so that no one can successfully pervert them.

Having said as much as that, we shall quote the words that are found in 1 Peter iii, 18—20, those which proclaim that Jesus Christ

will preach to the spirits in prison. The words are—“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” This quotation shows clearly that Christ, while his body lay in the grave, went to the world of the spirits, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Jesus Christ himself also proves that he went to the world of the spirits, namely paradise (not heaven, as some suppose), on the day he was crucified, in which he said to the thief—“Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in *paradise*” (Luke xxiii, 43). If it was heaven that was meant by this paradise, then Christ was not sure of his subject when he said, “today” to the thief; for he said to Mary, on the morning of the third day, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father,” which, of course, is in *heaven*. We must say that Christ was mistaken, or else he admitted that paradise and heaven are different places. We prefer to believe Jesus Christ, that he went to paradise, to the spirits, on the day of his crucifixion; and to heaven, to his Father, after his resurrection, as the scriptures testify. Besides this, there are phrases in the sermon of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, that prove beyond every argument, that the soul or spirit of Christ was for some time in “hell,” or spirit prison. Peter says the following—“And he (namely David) seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul [or his spirit] was not left in hell, neither his flesh [or his body] did see corruption” (Acts ii, 31). What is more clear than the word and the testimony, about these subjects? I hope there is no one more ready to listen to men perverting the scriptures, to uphold their opinions, than to those who use them as they are written. Now, it is said that Christ was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit; by which [namely the Holy Ghost] also HE went [not Noah, or anyone else, but Christ], and preached unto the *spirits in prison*; which *sometime* were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.” It is true that by the Spirit of God, or the priesthood, Noah preached to

the antediluvians; and it is also true that they were disobedient, and God, after his longsuffering towards them, caused them to drown, with respect to their bodies, and put them in prison, with respect to their spirits; but it is not true that "HE," namely Christ, preached to them in the time of Noah; otherwise, it could be said also that Christ was preaching on the day of Pentecost, when Peter, by the Spirit, converted the three thousand. Why is it not Christ himself that is meant when he is said to have "preached to the spirits in prison," as well as when he is said to have "preached to the disciples on the mount?" Can it not be acknowledged that spirits are intelligent objects? and if so, why could not Christ, with respect to his spirit, have preached to them when they were in paradise or hell, just like Isaiah prophesied, that he "proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound?" The truth is, "also *he*\* went and preached unto the *spirits in prison*, which sometime were disobedient" when Noah preached to them. It was when they were in the body on the earth that Noah preached to them, but when they were *spirits* in prison that Jesus Christ preached to them. Now, at this point, perhaps some reverend can ask an "unanswerable question," in his opinion, namely, Why did Christ preach to the spirits that were disobedient in the time of Noah, any more than to other spirits who were disobedient before or after that? O, conceited ones! do you not know that there are many prisons, and that some pay their debt sooner than others; and, therefore, that the opening of the prison cannot be proclaimed to all at the same time? "Those that were sometime disobedient" were all imprisoned at the same time, and for the same transgression; and in the days of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ it appears that they had paid their "last farthing;" otherwise, Jesus would not have gone to them to preach liberty and the opening of the prison. There are many spirits in the prison still, "and after

\* Perhaps the grammarians will argue that the word "HE," in the above reference, contains the body and the spirit of Christ, in an effort to deny his mission to the prison; but such a one should read carefully the account of the crucifixion of Christ and the two thieves, and sort out the misunderstandings. Christ said to the thief, "Today thou shalt be with *me* in paradise." Now, according to the manner in which some reason, if *he* and the thief went to paradise that day, their bodies went also! But everyone knows better than that.

many days (perhaps) shall they be visited." Everyone must have a chance to hear the gospel, either in this world, or in the next world; "for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are *dead* [or the spirits], that they might be judged according to men in the *flesh*, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter iv, 6). But since the spirit is the understanding part of man, we see the appropriateness of the reasoning of the apostle about the necessity of preaching the good news to the spirits that were deprived of hearing the gospel while in the flesh, so that they could "live according to God in the spirit," and be judged at the last day, like men who had heard the gospel while in the flesh. Now, let our opponents say what they wish, but it is abundantly clear that the above doctrine is scriptural, divine, just, and as worthy of its Author, as any other of his doctrine.

Associated with preaching to the spirits in prison, is the doctrine of "*baptizing for the dead*." It is not of much benefit to convert men or spirits, if they cannot be baptized for the remission of their sins; for "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Although Christ preached to the spirits in prison, if he had not arranged for a way to baptize them, everything was in vain, according to his own words—"He that believeth and is *baptized*, shall be saved." But we have cause to rejoice that the scriptures show that we, on the earth, can be baptized for the dead who believe from time to time in the world of the spirits, for it is not possible to administer the ordinance there, as it is here. In 1 Cor. xv, we see that Paul is reasoning with the Corinthians about the resurrection of the dead, because there were some in their midst who doubted the resurrection. Paul says, "If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised," "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain;" and in ver. 29, 30, he also says, "else what shall they do which are *baptized for the dead*, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" At one time all the Corinthians had believed in the preaching of Paul, the resurrection of Christ, and in the teaching about baptism for the dead (for the teaching of which the apostle was "in jeopardy every hour"); but there were some in their midst who denied the resurrection of the dead; and in order to convince such people, the apostle reasoned with them: if the resurrection was not to be, and

Christ had not arisen, and neither his sermon, nor their faith, nor their baptisms for the dead were of any worth—that it would all be in vain, and that it was better for them to eat and drink, and then die! There is no indication that any of the Corinthians doubted the doctrine of baptizing for the dead, but only the resurrection of the body; for baptizing for the dead was something they continued to do at that time in the church, as we can understand from the phraseology; and Paul was “in jeopardy every hour” for preaching it. He did not allow such doctrine in their midst, nor did he allow them to baptize anyone for the dead, unless that was according to the will of God, and something that had been commanded. Paul knew about the glorious chain that connects heaven with earth, which keeps the earth from being smitten with a curse. He knew that it was necessary “to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,” which could not be carried out without baptizing for the dead. It appears from the words of Paul, that the inhabitants of the other world cannot be perfected without us (Heb. xi, 40), nor we without them. Everyone since Adam is connected with one another, and all have their work to fulfill, and their work to finish. Those who are baptized for the dead can be considered saviors for them, since they are freed from their sins on the earth; for, “whatsoever is bound on the earth shall be bound in heaven also.” Perhaps Obadiah had reference to that when he said, “And SAVIOURS shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau [namely their being “judged according to men in the flesh”]; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s;” that is when “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” God makes known the believers from the other world, and has appointed a place for baptism in his temple to administer the ordinance of baptism for them on the earth. Before believing this, one must believe that God gives revelation in this age, which certainly is the truth.

O, how lovely is the thought that our revered forefathers, those who died without hearing the gospel, are in so much hope of yet being saved, as if they were on the earth now. God will call to “all that are afar off”—as far off as the world of the spirits, and every creature shall receive an opportunity for salvation, if he has not committed the unpardonable sin. His elect shall be gathered from every

place, throughout heaven and earth, and under the earth; and not one prison shall be closed, until they come out of it, either to liberty, or to the second death, where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. God is just, and just also are these glorious teachings which we are revealing to the world; and we say, in passing, that there has never been anything more appropriate than these to wear the name of "good tidings of great joy."

We hope that the proofs of the possibility for spirits to be saved from their prisons will not be a provocation to anyone in the flesh at present to neglect obedience to the gospel, when presented with the opportunity; for this is the condemnation now, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. Rather, men should obey promptly, for God has shown himself more merciful and benevolent than was ever thought he was. We pray that it will be thus, and that it will be proved that God "is love."

Let us all praise God above, for hearing the cry of the captive,  
 And bringing the bound from the dark prison, to proclaim a new message.  
 Those who were sometime disobedient, have heard the Son of God's voice;  
 All who believed are now free, and the dead are made alive.

The saints in the flesh have gone down to the water, joyfully in their stead,  
 That the sad prisoners, may enter into the kingdom of heaven!  
 So merciful is the God of the Saints; and his love, how great!  
 His divine justice, is seen through heaven and earth.