

## DISCOURSE.

By Elder ORSON PRATT, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, June 18, 1871.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

LET me call the attention of this congregation to a portion of the Word of God contained in the 46th and 47th verses of the last chapter of the gospel according to Saint Luke.

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

These are the words of our Savior to His disciples after His resurrection, and just before He was received up into heaven. The apostles who heard these words had gone forth among the Jewish nation and preached in their numerous cities, towns and villages, the gospel of the kingdom, declaring that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. They had gone forth crying repentance in the midst of the people, and had pointed them to Jesus as the Messiah, and now, after the resurrection, when Christ, in fulfillment of the prophets, had been sacrificed for the sins of the world, a new commission seems to have been given them. Jesus said unto them, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature;" and in another place, the last chapter of Matthew, the commission reads "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

These apostles received a divine commission to preach the gospel of the Son of God to every people under the whole heavens, first to the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem. They were to commence there to fulfill this great commission; they were not permitted to go forth and begin the great proclamation, to open the door of the kingdom in all its fullness and glory, until qualified; but were commanded to tarry, as it is recorded by one of the evangelists, at Jerusalem until they were endowed with power from on high. Then they were to go forth to all the world and proclaim repentance and remission of sins, the gospel of the Lord Jesus in its fullness. Jerusalem was to be the tarrying point, until then.

We accordingly find, as is recorded in the first and second chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, that they did tarry in that city, waiting for the power that was needful to enable them to carry out the commission which had been given to them. They could not fulfil the duties of that great mission without power from the heavens; they needed something more than human power; they needed that Spirit from on high which was promised them just before the crucifixion of Christ. Said He, "It is expedient for me that I go to the Father for your sakes, for if I go not to the Father the Comforter will not come; but if I go to the Father I will send him unto you. Without this Comforter it was impossible for them to accomplish the duties of that great and solemn commission that was given them by our Lord Himself. They needed the Comforter for various purposes. Jesus had told them that it should take the things of the Father and show them unto them; and that it should lead them into all truth and show them things to come. That is, it should make prophets and revelators of them, and inspire them to deliver the word of God to the inhabitants of the earth. Without this they could not magnify and honor the office of the Apostleship, which was the ministry to which they had been ordained. They needed the spirit of revelation, they needed power to commune with the heavenly hosts, with God the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, that they might be able to impart their will to the inhabitants of the earth, according to the heed and diligence which mankind might be disposed to give unto them.

On the Day of Pentecost, a great feast which had been observed by the Jewish nation for many generations, there were gathered at Jerusalem, not only the Twelve Apostles, but also all the disciples of Jesus who had not apostatized, to the number of about a hundred and twenty souls,—those of the ministry, the Seventies as well as the Twelve. They were gathered together in one place, in an upper room of the Temple; and they were engaged in fervent prayer and supplication before the Lord. What for? For the endowments and qualifications necessary to assist them in the work of the ministry. While they were thus assembled, praying and exercising faith with one accord, in the Lord and in his promises, they heard a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared to them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them,—that is, upon the hundred and twenty souls that were present, and they were filled with the Spirit of God, baptized with the Comforter, with the Holy Ghost and with fire; they were immersed in it, really baptized by immersion.

After having received the Holy Ghost or Comforter it immediately began to make

manifest a supernatural power upon those men of God. They were unlearned men, most of them, or most of the principal ones, at any rate, were unlearned; they had been engaged, as we heard this forenoon, at the business of fishing, and no doubt had lacked the opportunities for the acquisition of learning which many of the scribes, pharisees, high priests and religious people of that day enjoyed. The apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus were not doctors of law and divinity, they had not been educated and qualified for the ministry in any theological school, seminary or university, but they received the spirit of God, which manifested unto them the will of Heaven, and though they understood only their mother tongue, the power of the spirit bestowed upon them enabled them to speak in the various languages and tongues of the earth, and to declare the things of God therein on that occasion.

There was then assembled a very great company of Jews, also proselytes, who had come from the surrounding nations to Jerusalem to keep the feast of Pentecost, according to their usual custom, and they heard of the marvelous work that was transpiring in the midst of this little company, and they heard unlearned men declaring, in the several tongues in which they were born, the wonderful works of God. This was marvelous; it was not the result of human power, but it was by the operation of the Holy Ghost. However, in that large congregation, there were some who were disposed to accuse the disciples of folly. The followers of Jesus did not belong to the popular orders of the day. They were not high priests; they did not belong to the learned scribes or pharisees, but it was known that, as a general thing, they were illiterate men, and when the people saw this extraordinary manifestation of the power of God through them many ascribed it to the effects of new wine; said they "it can not be anything else," and they accused them of being actuated on that occasion with the spirit of intoxication or drunkenness. But Peter, with the Eleven, stood up in the midst of the thousands there assembled, and opened the proclamation of the gospel at Jerusalem according to the commission they had received, and what we wish to understand this afternoon is how, or in what manner, did he preach on that occasion? In other words, what was the plan of salvation he declared to the thousands of the children of men then gathered together? If we can find this out, we can ascertain what the gospel is.

When they were accused of being under the influence of new wine, Peter, holding the keys of the Kingdom, stood up and said, "This is not the effect of new wine, as ye suppose;" and as an argument to prove that they were not intoxicated he informed them that it was only the third hour of the day. In those days probably, people did not get drunk at all hours, as they do in these, and according to the custom then, the third hour was too soon. Well, if the effects now made manifest to the people are not the results of drinking new wine, to what do you ascribe them? Said Peter "This is that which was spoken of by the Prophet Joel who says: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days saith God, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophecy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, and upon my servants and handmaidens will I pour out of my spirit, in those days, and they shall prophesy; and I will show wonders in the heavens above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall be turned into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord shall come.'" Here, then, was a prophecy, repeated by the apostle Peter to prove what was the cause of the effects manifested on that occasion.

There is one thing in relation to this quotation from the prophecies of Joel to which I wish to call your special attention. Peter did not say, this is the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, for we all know that it was not then fulfilled. The spirit was not poured out upon all flesh; all men and women were not made prophets on that occasion, consequently the prophecy was not fulfilled. Peter said "these cloven tongues of fire, and this spirit that has been poured out upon these hundred and twenty individuals is the same spirit which Joel said should be poured out in the last days upon all flesh." That promise, down to the nineteenth century, has never been fulfilled: the spirit has never yet been poured out upon all flesh, making all men and women living, prophets, seers, revelators, &c. The work was begun on the Day of Pentecost; but the sun was not darkened on that occasion, nor the moon turned into blood; the signs that were to precede the second coming of the Son of God were not then shown forth, and consequently the prophecy was not fulfilled. It yet remains to be fulfilled. I would like to ask what are we going to do with the whole Christian world, which declare that there are to be no more prophets, revelators or inspired men, when the word of the Lord through Joel says all flesh are to become prophets,—that is, all who are spared on the earth, for there will be a tremendous destruction before that is fulfilled? The wicked will be swept from the earth, and all who remain will become revelators, prophets and inspired men, getting visions and revelations and foretelling the future. What shall we do with the sayings that have gone forth

and been inculcated and promulgated by numerous sects and parties, that the day of visions, revelations and prophecies has past? But we will pass on.

After having quoted this prophecy, to show that the spirit that man should receive under the gospel dispensation was to give them revelation and prophecy, and to show that the spirit then being poured out was that spoken of by Joel, the Apostle refers to what David the psalmist said about Jesus, and about His sufferings, death and resurrection; and having quoted what the prophets,—witnesses that were dead, had to say about the Holy One, they, as living persons, the oracles of God then in the midst of the people, bore witness that Jesus was the very Christ, and that the Jews had put to death the Holy One; these combined testimonies convinced many that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. This was not a popular doctrine in those days, as it is now. There are millions at the present day with whom it is popular to believe in Christ; they do so traditionally, and because it is customary in the nations where they were born; they believe it because they have had millions of copies of the word of God published in their midst, and spread broadcast over the nations of Christendom. But in those days very few believed it, the very great majority of the people believed Him to be a wicked impostor, and regarded Him as the offscouring of all things, the friend of publicans and sinners; and they said that He cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub; they called Him a sabbath-breaker, a wicked man, and so on; and the most religious people of those days were His greatest persecutors, and as they had influence over the rest it was very unpopular indeed to believe that He was the true Messiah. But the arguments brought forth in the first Christian sermon after the resurrection of Christ were sufficient to send conviction into the hearts of many thousands of people. They believed or professed to believe in their ancient prophets, and when they were quoted in relation to Jesus, and the testimony of living witnesses was borne they cried out, in the anguish of their hearts: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" As much as to say, we see that our nation has crucified Jesus, the Christ; we thought He was an impostor and that He ought to die, but now we are convinced that He is the Holy One, and that He has indeed risen from the dead; and is there any salvation for our nation seeing that it has put Jesus to death? These were the feelings of sincere, sin-convicted persons on that occasion, and they cried, "men and brethren, what shall we do?"

I sometimes think that if they had lived in our day they would have had so many ways pointed out to obtain the forgiveness of their sins that they would not have known which way to turn, and perhaps would not have had much confidence in what was said to them on the subject. But these men, being under the influence of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, knew precisely what these convicted sinners should do in order to obtain the pardon of their sins. Now mark the answer, and see if it agree with the ways taught by the Christian sects. Peter said unto these enquiring souls, who believed and were pricked in their hearts, for belief comes before repentance, for a person who did not believe would not repent. Peter said, "Repent." What more? Come to the "mourner's bench?" Oh no, that is not written there. Come here to the "mercy seat, and be prayed for?" Oh no, nothing of that kind was said. Then what else were they to do besides repent? Said Peter, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost." What do you mean, Peter, by the Holy Ghost? Do you mean that same Holy Spirit—the Comforter that you have just received, and that has rested upon the hundred and twenty individuals who are followers of Christ? Yes, for he had just told them that it was the effects of the Holy Spirit which they had been witnessing and they, no doubt, felt anxious to receive the same, for the Holy Spirit was that which would enable them to prophecy, see visions, dream dreams and guide them into all truth, reveal unto them the things of the Father, and show them things to come, hence, it was a Spirit greatly to be desired, and they wished to know how they might obtain it; and here was the path. It is very plain and very simple. Can it be wondered at, then, that so few in Salt Lake City wanted to go to the "Mourner's bench," at the Methodist camp-meeting, after having heard and obeyed these principles? No. They have heard these principles for years and years, and having tested them, the fables of sectarianism possess no charms for them.

Seeing then that the pardon of sins is what the penitent soul desires, how is he to obtain it? By being baptized. What? Do you mean to say that sinners can obtain pardon by being baptized in water? "What effect," inquires one, "has water in washing away sins?" It would have no effect whatever if God had instituted some other way; but seeing that He has not, but has commanded sinners, first, to believe that Jesus is the Christ; second, to repent of their sins; and third, to be baptized for the remission of their sins in His name, that is the right way; and though the water, independent of the blood and atonement of Christ and the commandment of God has no efficacy whatever to wash away sins, yet it has great power because of these things, for the man that complies with this

ordinance witnesses to God that he believes in Jesus and His gospel and is willing to comply with its requirements. But if men should say, "There is no efficacy in water and we will take some other way to obtain the pardon of our sins; the water is only to answer a good conscience towards God, and is not particularly essential, do you think they would obtain the pardon of their sins, after hearing the gospel preached in its purity and fulness by a man having authority from God? They might pray until they were as old as Methuselah: "Lord pardon, forgive and blot out our sins," but do you think the Lord would hear them?" Not at all. Why not? "Is it not written," says a person of this class, "that the Lord is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children?" Yes, but it must be remembered that this is written of those who have believed, repented, and obeyed the gospel; it was not written concerning unbelievers and the disobedient. When they have once believed in Jesus Christ and have been baptized for the remission of their sins, they can call upon God in all confidence and He is more willing to give His Holy Spirit unto them than earthly parents are to give good gifts unto their children, and you know how willing they are to do that, for they like to see their children joyful and happy. So it is with our Heavenly Father. He likes to see His children who have repented, and obeyed His gospel, joyful and happy, and He is willing to give good gifts unto them; but He never can to those who do not keep His commandments. They may pray until they are gray-headed and they are about to fall into their graves and their sins would not be pardoned.

But again, Peter informs the inquiring believers on the Day of Pentecost that if they would repent and be baptized they should not only receive the remission of their sins, but they should also receive the Holy Ghost. Was this promise only to the people then present? No, for if we read the next verse we find that "the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." Is not that promise universal,—to every people, nation, kindred and tongue, Jew and gentile, bond and free? Yes, the promise is to all the Lord our God shall call; not only to the three thousand baptized on that occasion, but to all afar off. Does not that scope in all languages, nations, kindred and tongues? Yes. What! shall they all receive the Holy Ghost? Yes, if they will comply with these conditions. Shall they all be pardoned if they will repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins? Yes. Now, what effect would that vast multitude expect to follow the reception of the Holy Ghost by them? Supposing this congregation had been present eighteen centuries ago at Jerusalem at the first gospel sermon preached after the ascension of Christ, and that, in the anguish of your hearts you had enquired what you must do to receive the pardon of your sins and how you could obtain the Holy Ghost, and what effects that Holy Ghost would have had upon you, would you not have expected to receive something precisely similar to what the hundred and twenty had received upon whom it was poured out? Could you have expected anything else? No. But it is very different with the Christian sects to-day: they think the Holy Ghost will perform everything ascribed to it except the supernatural powers and effects; but when it comes to revelation, prophecy, dreaming dreams, foretelling future events, casting out devils, healing the sick, discerning of spirits, speaking in and interpreting other languages and tongues, they boldly declare, as I heard in my boyhood, and again during the past week, that these wonderful and miraculous gifts were only intended for that day and age of the world. All the other effects are to continue, but they are to cease. The spirit is to purify, sanctify, justify, to give love, joy, peace, longsuffering, patience, hope, and all these great and glorious effects that are promised in the word of God; but when it comes to these other effects they are all to be done away. By whom? By Christendom, by those professing to be the teachers and leaders of the people. By what authority do they do these things away? Can they find within the lids of this holy Bible, from beginning to end, that a period should ever arrive, so long as there was one soul on the earth to be saved or pardoned of its sins, that these miraculous effects should cease? No, they have taken this responsibility upon themselves, and it is a very fearful responsibility indeed to say that they are done away. I would not dare to do it, I should be afraid of fulfilling that prophecy delivered by Paul, when he says that "in the last days perilous times shall come; men shall be lovers of their own selves, proud, boasters, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, incontinent, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." I do not want to come under the declaration of Paul; I do not want to be numbered with those who fulfil this prediction that he uttered about the people of the latter days. He was not speaking altogether of the wicked world that made no profession of religion. He was not referring to atheists and deists—and those who did not profess Christianity; but of professed religionists, people who profess to believe in the Bible