

# DISCOURSE BY ELDER ORSON PRATT In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, May 16th, 1880.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

I WILL read a few verses of the 14th chapter, of the revelation, given to St. John. [The speaker then read from the 14th verse to the end of the chapter; also the 6th and 7th verses of the same chapter.] I do not think that I will, at this present time, select any part of the scriptures, or any particular verse which I have read, as a foundation for my remarks, but I will endeavor to follow, (so far as I can get faith and have the spirit of the Lord to direct me, in my speech and in my understanding,) some of the subjects about which I have been reading, without selecting any particular verse as a text.

We are taught here that some great and important events are to take place on the earth in the latter times; that the earth will become so exceedingly corrupt and wicked, or the inhabitants thereof, that the Lord will be under the necessity of sending his angels, as well as acting himself personally to reap the earth. This is represented as being at the time of harvest. You may ask at what particular period of the world is the time of harvest. In one of the parables of our Savior, recorded in one of the four gospels, he informs us that "the harvest is the end of the world." The Savior did not mean, the end of the earth on which we dwell; this is not his meaning; he meant the end of the world. Who are the world? The inhabitants that dwell on the earth. Now, we have an interpretation of this in the flood that came in ancient times. The flood did not destroy the earth. The earth was not blotted out as an organized planet; but we are told that it was the end of the antediluvian world; God once destroyed the world, the apostle Peter says, by a flood of water, but will in the latter days visit the inhabitants of the world with a desolating fire. The world then, was once destroyed by water; that is, the wicked of the world, while the righteous were spared. Jesus, in speaking of this last destruction that should come upon the world, has represented it as something similar to the days of Noah. As it was, says Jesus, in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the end of the world; as they were eating and drinking and engaged in all manner of business transactions in the days of the flood, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away, except Noah and his family, so also, to carry out the illustration given by the Savior, will it be with the inhabitants of the earth, in the last days, when the Lord will destroy the wicked out of this planet. He will find the inhabitants without much faith. They will be exceedingly corrupt and will be unprepared for the day of his coming. Hence that day is represented as coming like a thief in the night. Generally, when our houses are broken into by thieves, we are not prepared for it, we are not looking for the event, it comes very unexpectedly; so will it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. The inhabitants of the earth will say in their hearts, "To-morrow will be as this day, and more abundantly, therefore let us eat, drink and be merry," etc. But by and bye, in an unexpected moment, represented by midnight darkness, behold! the bridegroom will come. The sound from heaven was not to come just after the sun goes down, or early in the evening, but at midnight, when nearly all the people are supposed to be slumbering and asleep, unaware of the great events that were coming, suddenly, unexpectedly a cry was heard, "Behold! the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." We might ask why it is that the inhabitants of the earth should be so unprepared for a day of such immense importance, as the one represented in the scriptures of truth. Will not the Lord give them a sufficient warning before that day shall come? Will he not send forth a message to the inhabitants of the earth, so that they may, if they will, be well prepared for that solemn and dreadful period? He will most certainly do so, according to the words which I have read here in this divine book. No less than an angel is to be sent forth from heaven, before this hour of God's judgment shall come upon the inhabitants of the

earth—a heavenly messenger, one sent by the special command of God with a message to all people, not to a few, not to one nation or a few nations, that may be called civilized, or Christian as they call themselves, not sent to some dark and benighted quarter of the earth among the heathen, but send an angel from heaven with a message to all people. What is to be the nature of his predicted message? The everlasting gospel. What are we to understand by these words, "everlasting gospel?" I understand it to mean the same gospel that was in the beginning—the same gospel that was preached in ancient times; not a new gospel, not a false gospel, not something that God has not ordained; but a divine message of glad tidings to the inhabitants of the earth. To whom will this heavenly message be sent? We are told here in this same chapter, that it is to be preached "unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." From this I draw the conclusion, that there will be no people, however remote they may be located on this our globe, but what will have this message of the everlasting gospel proclaimed in their hearing. There is something very peculiar about this. The gospel in ancient times was not sent by an angel. It was committed by our Lord and Savior himself while he was here personally on the earth. He chose men, he ordained them, he called them and gave them their commission, commanded them to preach the gospel in their day to the nations of the earth. They did this, so far as they had opportunity, before this prophecy was given that I have been reading, so much so, that the Apostle Paul, before he was beheaded, declared that this gospel which he had been preaching all his life, from the time of his conversion, had been "preached to every creature under heaven." Thus we see how extensively they had sent forth the ancient gospel among the inhabitants of the eastern hemisphere; that is, so far as they could carry or send it forth by others. But after Paul's death,—after he had made this declaration that the gospel had been preached to every creature, whereof he had been made a minister—the end did not come. You recollect a certain saying in the 24th chapter of Matthew, that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." Now, how are you going to reconcile the saying of Paul with the saying of the Savior? He says, "then shall the end come," that is not the end of the earth, but the end of the world, when this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the world for a witness to every creature, and yet the end did not come after Paul had made the declaration that it was preached to every creature. "Why!" says one, "here is a flat contradiction." No; you must read the connection in order to understand the two passages. Read the 24th chapter of Matthew carefully and you will notice that Jesus was portraying certain signs that were to take place just before or immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, and also the signs that were to precede the end of the world or his second coming. Among the signs enumerated to take place immediately preceding his second coming, was that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." Now, that makes it plain, that in the last days God would again send the gospel to the human family, and it should again be preached as it was in the days of the apostles to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, and that when he should send it in the last days, it should come by "another angel flying in the midst of heaven." Quite a different way of introducing the gospel in the last days, to that in which it was introduced in the meridian of time. Have there been any people in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in Australia, in America, or in the islands of the sea, who have testified, during the last seventeen centuries, or since this revelation was given to St. John, that another angel has come and brought the same gospel that was preached in ancient times? Has the Roman Catholic Church, the church that pretends to have come directly down, with authority, from the days of the apostles—has it declared to any nation, any people, any kindred, or tongue that an angel has brought the gospel to them? Oh, no. Go and read their books, and hear them preach, they are widely spread over all the civi-

lized world—read their books, and they will tell you in the most pointed terms that the canon of Scripture is full; they will inform you, that there has been no revelation since the days of the apostles; they do inform you of this in their writings; they say that no new revelation has been given since the days of the apostles; hence there has been no communication by angels; for angels, when they are sent, always come with a new revelation; consequently they have not had this fulfilled upon their heads. We go back to some of those modern churches, to King Henry the Eighth some three or four centuries ago, and to the Protestants that came out, and protested in Europe, as well as in England, against this mother church. Ask Martin Luther; ask John Calvin; ask any of those early reformers; and then come to John Wesley, and ask him and others that have lived since the days of the Reformation, till the present century of the Christian era—"Have any of you had a message delivered to you from heaven by an angel, the message of the everlasting gospel? Have any of you had such a message committed to your charge, and have you been commanded by an angel or by divine revelation to proclaim it to every nation, kindred, tongue and people?" The united answer from all these Protestant dissenters would be in accordance with the Catholic mother's answer, "No; we have had no angels; we have had no new revelation, we have had no inspired men; we have had no communication from God in our day, neither in the days of our fathers, nor in the days of our fathers' fathers, for a great many centuries; the heavens are completely sealed up to us; no answer comes; no revelation comes; no gospel comes; no angel comes; but the heavens have become as brass over our heads, etc." Well then, if there are no people among all the religious sects of Christendom, who bear testimony to the ministration of this angel, is it not time, should we not naturally expect from reading the prophecies of the holy prophets that it was nearly the time for God to send this angel about which I have been reading, in the 14th chapter of Revelation?

Fifty years ago, and a little upwards, these scriptures, concerning the coming of the angel were literally fulfilled. An angel came; that angel appeared in glory and in brightness; that angel appeared to a boy—a common farmer's boy—an unlearned youth, and told him to go to a certain hill in the State of New York, and there he should find ancient records, containing the fulness of the everlasting gospel; and that he should translate this everlasting gospel, and these records, and finally, was commanded by the angel and by the spirit of revelation and prophecy, to organize the kingdom of God on the earth, or, in other words, the church of God, preparatory to what? Preparatory to the coming of the Son of Man. "But," says one, "I always thought the church had been on the earth ever since the days of the apostles. What a message this is for an angel to come and tell a boy to organize the church and kingdom of God, when we have so many churches—churches that we call St. John's Church, St. Peter's Church, St. Mark's Church, and other Christian churches, and yet you tell us now that a boy has been commanded by an angel to organize the church of God on the earth again." It is a very strange thing in the minds of this generation, that a youth so young, so inexperienced, so untaught, should receive the ministration of an holy angel, with a commandment to organize on the earth the church of the living God. If the church of God were already on the earth, how unnecessary it would be for this youth to perform a work of that kind. There would be no necessity for it whatever. If the Methodists were the church of God, if the Catholics were the church of God, if any one of the Protestant denominations was the church of God, it would be altogether unnecessary for an angel to be sent with the everlasting gospel. The fact is, that till the year 1830, there was no such thing as the church of God on the earth, there was no such thing in Asia, Africa, Europe, America, or upon the islands of the sea; the church of God could not be found. If it could have been found, all you would have had to do would have been to go and seek that church, and ask the apostles, the inspired men of that church the privilege of becoming members thereof, and you would be saved,

that is, if you walked diligently according to the law of the gospel, to the end of your days. But inasmuch as there was no such thing as the church of God on the earth, it became necessary, as one of the signs before the end of the world should come, that this gospel of the kingdom should again be preached to all nations as a witness. I told you, in a few brief words, how the angel brought to light the fulness of the gospel. He did not commence in the palaces of kings, nor emperors, nor in the White House at Washington, nor in the halls of governors, nor in any of the ecclesiastical institutions, but a farmer's boy, young, without experience in the literature of the world, was chosen, to whom was committed the everlasting gospel, and he, by the command of God, conferred authority upon others; and the angel commanded them to bear witness of the same, which they have done; and God has confirmed and revealed to a great many witnesses the truth of this, by sending forth the Holy Ghost, which testifies of the things of God, and also bestows the gifts and powers of the ancient gospel, as they were given when the church of God was on the earth in the meridian of time. No wonder that these powers and gifts, such as healing the sick and opening the eyes of the blind, healing the lame and rebuking various diseases—no wonder that they have not been for many generations, among mankind. It is because mankind have not had the gospel preached by authority in its fulness and purity; it is because mankind, for many centuries, have not had the church of God among them; it is because there have been no true Christian believers who have obeyed the ancient gospel. There was no promise that these signs should follow believers in the spurious doctrines of men; but the promise is to all who believe the ancient gospel, which men, by authority, administered unto the people. To obey men having no authority to baptize, no authority to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands—persons who obey the doctrines preached by these men, cannot claim the promises; they cannot be pronounced as true believers; and hence, the signs do not follow them. But when the church of God is on the earth, the same effects always follow; when the same gospel that was believed and obeyed in the first century of the Christian era, as received and accepted by the human family, or any portion of them, the persons thus obedient constitute the true church of God; such are true believers in the scriptural sense of the word; and they, and they only, have a claim upon the signs that should follow believers.

But I do not wish to dwell very long upon this preparatory message of the gospel. I will just name in a brief manner, some of its most important principles, and then pass on to some subjects connected with the preparatory work of the second coming of Jesus. I would say that the everlasting gospel, in a few words, is this: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God, that he is the Savior of all that will receive his gospel, that he atoned, by his sufferings and death for the sins of the children of men; believe in the gospel or doctrine that he preached, namely, repent of all your sins, turn away from them, reform your lives, and then be baptized for the remission of your sins, and be sure that the person who baptizes you is a man sent of God, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto you, being commissioned from heaven; for if he is not commissioned, and has no authority from heaven, though he may baptize you a hundred times, your sins will not be remitted; it requires an authorized servant of God, to baptize for the remission of sins. After doing this, if you desire to be changed in your feeling, changed from the old man to a new creature, you will seek to receive the Holy Ghost. But be sure and not neglect the ordinance, appointed of God in these Scriptures, through which the Holy Ghost is given. Remission of sins is granted through faith, repentance and baptism; but after this, the Holy Ghost is granted, by the laying on of the hands of the servants of God; be sure that somebody who is authorized to lay on hands, administers the ordinance. All do not have this authority; they did not in the days of the apostles. When Philip went and preached to the inhabitants of Samaria, and baptized all who believed in the gospel, he did not have authority to lay hands upon them. They had to send many

miles, to the city of Jerusalem, to have Peter and John take a journey to the city of Samaria; and when they got there they found those baptized believers, but they had not received the Holy Ghost. They believed in Philip's teachings; they had repented; they had prayed; they had turned away from their sins, and there was great joy in the city; but yet there was not one of them who had received the Holy Ghost. Why? Because the administrators were not there; but when Peter and John came, they knelt down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, "for as yet," the Scriptures say, "he was fallen upon none of them. Then laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Thus the Lord proved to these Samaritans that Peter and John were truly his servants; they were authorized; there was no guess work about it; it was not merely an opinion; here was a testimony that they could not deny.

These, in a very few words, are the first principles of the everlasting gospel; they are the first principles to be received in order to become members of the kingdom or church of God. When the Lord authorized this young man to translate the book containing the everlasting gospel, knowing that he had got to build up the church and kingdom on the earth, knowing also that the people must, in order to be saved, receive the Holy Ghost, he therefore ordained him with the same authority that Peter and John held in ancient times, so that he also could lay his hands upon those who were baptized, penitent believers, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for without the reception of the Holy Ghost the church of God could not exist on the earth. Others were also called by the ministration of angels. Hence they had a right to baptize, a right to administer the Lord's supper, a right to confirm by the laying on of hands, and a right to organize and establish permanently the kingdom of God on the earth that was predicted by Daniel, which should be set up by the God of heaven in the latter days. The kingdom that was set up, in the meridian of time, by our Savior and his apostles, was not the one about which Daniel spoke. Daniel speaks of a kingdom that should be set up, which he calls the kingdom of God, which should stand forever. Now, that ancient kingdom did not stand forever, that is the difference between the kingdom built up by Jesus and his apostles, and the latter-day kingdom; the former only existed on the earth for a short time. You may ask what became of it? What became of those who believed in it? A great portion were murdered, some beheaded, some crucified, some killed in one form, and some in another. What became of the kingdom? It was finally driven from off the face of the earth, but it still existed; for Jesus promised, in the last chapter of St. Matthew, that it should exist, and that the apostles who were chosen in ancient days should exist. He says, "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." He has not forsaken those apostles—those eleven men whom he called to the work. Notwithstanding they were crucified, beheaded and destroyed, they were only destroyed temporally,—it was only their temporal bodies that were destroyed. The church that they built up was destroyed temporally from the earth, but it still continued to exist in heaven; and Jesus is with the apostles and with the church even now, and has been with them during all the dark ages that have covered the nations of the earth for the last eighteen centuries, during all that long period wherein there has been no church of God on the earth, yet Jesus has been with the ancient church, and with the ancient apostles, according to the promise which he made, that the gates of hell should not prevail against them. But alas! so far as this earth was concerned, the gates of hell did prevail against the church of God; the kingdoms of this world did make war with the saints and overcame them. Hence it was necessary that the church should again be restored, that the gospel should again be preached, and that apostles should again be called, as one of the great signs of the second coming of the Son of Man, that all nations and people should hear the