

Soon after the apostasy of Elder John E. Page, Elder Benson was called to fill his place in the Quorum of the Twelve. His first mission was to the Eastern cities. He left the Saints in a destitute condition, on the Indian lands in the Omaha country, about 150 or 200 miles from any point where they could obtain supplies. After they had been driven from their homes in Illinois, Elder Benson went on a mission to the East to prove the people and to see what they would do for the children of God in this extreme strait. He visited Cincinnati, Pittsburg, Philadelphia, New York, Boston and many other cities, and laid before the people the condition of the Latter-day Saints. This was an unpleasant duty, but it had to be performed or we could not rise in judgment against them. Bro. Benson performed it manfully. He visited the Mayors and leading men of these great cities; but had he gone to splitting rails with his own hands during the winter he might have earned more money and more bread and food for the hungry than was donated in the principal cities of this Christian land, and than was donated altogether if we except the donations of three personal friends.

In the spring of 1847 he, with the pioneers, commenced the journey to this place. The road had to be sought out. We had no pilot or guide. We made about seven hundred miles of new road to arrive at this spot, passing over some four hundred miles of trappers' trail, where teams had passed before. As soon as we arrived here it became necessary for somebody to go back to meet the emigration, as we were aware that six hundred wagons were on the road. Elder Benson and O. P. Rockwell performed this duty, and they went alone four hundred miles across a desert in an Indian country, before they met the advance of the emigration, to impart to them the glad news, that a spot had been found where the standard of Zion could be raised, and where there was a prospect that we, at last, might enjoy our religion in peace. He continued his journey meeting the camps until he had imparted these glad tidings to the whole of the emigrating companies. He then returned. Afterwards he went with the Pioneers to Winter Quarters, and remained there during that year. In '48, in company with Elder Orson Hyde and myself, who had been appointed to preside, he remained in the Pottawattomie country to assist in fitting out the emigration. In '49, in company with the rear division of the emigration he crossed the Plains with his family. An incident on this journey is worth narrating. He was taken violently sick and his family and friends gave him up, for they had lost all hope of his recovery. The fifty with which I traveled were in the rear. When I came up to his encampment I found him in this position. I called upon the Saints to hold a prayer meeting, and they fasted and prayed for him. I took some of the elders on to one of the highest mountains in the neighborhood and we besought the Lord with all our powers to heal him. He was healed as if by magic and he was able to pursue the journey, reaching the Valley with his family in the Fall of '49.

He was a Senator of the State of Deseret, an organization which governed this Territory for three years previous to the organization of the Territory of Utah. He was sent to develop the county of Tooele, and built the first saw and grist mills there, and did much to improve the county, and afterwards represented it in the Legislative Assembly. Subsequently, on the commencement of settlements in Cache Valley, he went and labored for the development of the settlements there, making, however, in the meantime, a mission to the States to assist the emigration, and a mission to Europe. While on the latter he labored in Great Britain and Scandinavia. In the development of settlements in Cache Valley he was among the first to build saw and grist mills there; he also organized a regiment of militia in that county, there being then many hostile bands of Indians living in the vicinity. He was elected Colonel of that regiment, and the regiment increasing until it became a brigade he, of course, became its brigadier general. The brigade now contains three regiments, and is, probably, one of the strongest in the Territory.

Elder Benson was elected from that place to represent, in the Legislative Council, the district including Cache and Bear Lake valleys. This position he has held for several years. He was elected at the last election for the next ensuing two years.

He was a man exceedingly zealous in the performance of his duties; and like the ancient apostles, labored without purse or scrip, by his gigantic exertions

in business at home, maintaining his family besides performing these missions and discharging every other call made upon him.

About four years ago, he took a mission to the Sandwich Islands, his escape from a watery grave while attempting to land there, being very remarkable. That was the last time he went beyond the limits of the Territory. When the ery was raised from one end of the Territory to the other, "We must put through the Pacific Railroad," Benson, Farr & West formed an association for grading two hundred miles of the Central road. They labored, under many disadvantages, to accomplish their contract, during the winter; and when the road was completed, I am sorry to say that they who had promised to pay up immediately the work was done, failed to fulfil their agreements, and they are yet indebted to Benson and Company \$200,000 or thereabouts. This failure on the part of the Railway Company involved Elder Benson in serious pecuniary difficulties, which should have been closed up six months ago, and probably produced a worry and vexation which may have hastened his death; though it is said that on the day of his death he was remarkably well and seemed to be in the enjoyment of very fine spirits and good prospects.

I am thankful that he died in the harness, having done his duty manfully, which should be inscribed upon his tomb-stone, and that no wicked man had the pleasure of spilling his blood, as in the case of Joseph and Hyrum, David Patten, Parley P. Pratt, and other martyrs.

We rejoice in the blessing and privilege of freedom of thought and freedom of opinion and in the right to administer the ordinances of the Gospel. When we built the Temple at Nauvoo, we built a font expressly for the baptism of the dead. It was built after the fashion of the seal of King Solomon; it was a beautiful place, standing upon its twelve oxen; but when the mob had succeeded in driving the Saints, a Baptist minister got possession of the Temple, and broke the horns from the oxen, and otherwise marred them, mashed up the font, and rendered the place, as General Kane says, in his historical address, "too noisome for any man to abide in it," and finally consumed the Temple to ashes. We thank God that we enjoy the freedom of the Constitution, which guarantees the right and the liberty to worship God as we please. We thank Him for this privilege and that our apostles can lie down and die in the midst of their friends, and not be murdered. It is a change in our history. Thank God for it!

May the blessings of Israel's God be upon you, and peace dwell and abide with you, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus: Amen.

REMARKS

On the death of Elder Ezra T. Benson, by Elder WILFORD WOODRUFF, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sept. 5th, 1869.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

I am called upon this afternoon to make some remarks upon the life and death of Brother Ezra Taft Benson, who has been suddenly taken out of our midst,—from time into eternity.

I have long since considered it unnecessary to make any excuses for performing my duty upon any occasion in public; but if there is any position where a man might have doubts about satisfying his own mind or the minds of his friends, perhaps it is on an occasion like this. It is well known, at least to the Latter-day Saints, that the elders of Israel rise to speak without any written sermon or preparation of any kind. Many of us have been engaged, the greater portion of our lives, in preaching the gospel to the world, and on every occasion we depend for assistance and preparation upon the spirit of God. This is my position this afternoon. I rise before you with no prepared sermon, and with no particular principles that I have settled in my mind to address you upon; depending, as on all occasions, upon the spirit of God and the faith and prayers of my friends. This dispensation of Providence causes me many reflections; and I presume it is the case with every Latter-day Saint present. In the first place I will ask the question what position did Bro. Benson occupy while in the flesh, and how many have ever held the same position on the face of the earth. The words contained in the 7th verse of the 52nd chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah are brought to my mind. While contemplating the great work of building up the Zion of God in the last days he says:

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

What position can any man occupy on the face of the earth that is more noble, God-like, high and glorious than to be a messenger of salvation unto the human family? What more responsible position can a man occupy than to be an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ? I do not know of any in this or any other generation. The thought also arises in my mind how many individuals have ever held this position on the earth? I find in the history recorded in the Bible, from the days of Adam down through the different dispensations and generations, that prophets have existed on the earth. Adam, himself, was a prophet and he ordained his sons to the Melchizedek priesthood; the gospel of Christ was taught to him after the Fall and he attended to the ordinances of the house of God. He was a high priest and, as a high priest, held the keys of the Kingdom of God. There were many sons who were high priests, having been ordained to this office by their father Adam. Three years before his death he called together Seth, Enos, Jared, Cainan, Mahaleel, Methusaleh and many others of his descendants in the Valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, and there rose up and blessed them with his great and last patriarchal blessing. This has been given to us by revelation; and these men were prophets and high priests.

Tracing down the sacred history through the different ages and dispensations we learn that many prophets existed among the children of men. Moses was a law-giver in Israel and held the office of a prophet, seer and revelator. When I say that many prophets have existed, it probably needs some qualification. The number of persons thus honored of God has not been many when compared with the whole of the people who have lived; but in every gospel age and dispensation God has had His prophets and servants upon the earth to make known His will to its inhabitants. In the days of Moses elders were chosen, as His counselors; and seventy elders were ordained to bear record of the things of God and to assist Moses in the work to be performed in his day; but we do not read of apostles being chosen under Moses's dispensation. Jesus tabernacled in the flesh to establish the Kingdom of His Father upon the earth, and when he was thirty years of age he went forth administering in the ordinances of the house of God, and he chose twelve Apostles to assist him, and he gave to them the keys of the Kingdom of God. And the highest office that any man has ever held on the face of the earth in this or any other generation is that of an apostle.

We read that God set in His church first, apostles, then prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, gifts, graces and helps; and the office of an apostle entitles him to hold the keys of the Kingdom of God; and what he binds on earth is bound in heaven, and what he looses on earth is loosed in heaven. The history of the Twelve whom Jesus chose is to be found in the New Testament; within the lids of that book their travels, the course they pursued and the doctrines they taught are published to the world. Nearly the whole of them sealed their testimony with their blood. Some were crucified as their master was; some were beheaded; and all except John suffered martyrdom in some way for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. This was the fate of the first quorum of Apostles we have any history of.

After the death and resurrection of the Savior, when He ministered to His disciples the last time on earth, He informed them that He had other sheep not of this fold whom He was going to visit and minister unto. The Book of Mormon is a record of the descendants of the House of Israel who dwelt on this continent anciently. It gives us the history of the Jaredites who came from the Tower of Babel; of Lehi and his family, who came from Jerusalem and also of the Lamanites and Nephites, the descendants of Nephi and Lemuel, sons of Lehi. In that record we find that Christ, after His death and resurrection, visited that branch of the house of Israel which dwelt on this continent. On the occasion of that visit we are informed that Jesus chose Twelve Apostles and gave to them the same power, keys, gifts and graces that He had given to His apostles on the eastern continent; and they went forth, and magnified their callings. All of this quorum of the Twelve Apostles had the promise of departing and being with Christ when they were seventy-two years old, except three of them. To these three Jesus gave a promise similar to that which He gave to John the Revelator,—namely that they should tarry in the flesh until He came. History informs us that the wicked tried to kill John in various ways, placing him, on one occasion, in a cauldron of boiling oil, but his life was preserved; and that finally in the reign of Domitian Caesar he was banished to the Isle of Patmos to work in the lead mines. While there he was blessed with visions, revelations, knowledge, light and truth, a portion of which we have recorded in what are called the Revelations of St. John. In the reign of Nerva John was recalled, and afterwards wrote his epistles. The first quorum of Apostles were all put to death, except John, and we are informed that he still remains on the earth, though his body has doubtless undergone some change. Three of the Nephites, chosen here by the Lord Jesus as

His Apostles, had the same promise—that they should not taste death until Christ came, and they still remain on the earth in the flesh.

Thus we have an account in the Book of Mormon of but two quorums of Twelve Apostles being chosen previous to this dispensation; but in these last days the Lord called upon Joseph Smith, gave him power and authority to organize His church and kingdom again upon the earth and gave him the Holy Priesthood and the keys of the kingdom of God. Joseph was ordained to the apostleship under the hands of men holding the keys of the kingdom of God in the days of Jesus,—namely, Peter, James and John.

I shall not occupy time with entering into the details of these things. I have referred to them to show the importance of the office held by Brother Benson. He was a member of one of the three quorums of Apostles that have ever been chosen on the face of the earth since Jesus Christ tabernacled in the flesh, that we have any knowledge of. The first chosen when Jesus commenced his public labors in the flesh; the second after his resurrection, here on this continent, and the third, since the revelation of the gospel in our own day. Here we find only thirty-six men, chosen at various times and dispensations, in six thousand years, to hold this order of priesthood, unless they were chosen in the days of Enoch and at times in which the Bible does not inform us. This number has been increased, however, by others who have been chosen to fill vacancies in these quorums, as in the case of Judas, and others; but it is safe to say that the entire number who have held this office from the days of Adam until to-day has been very limited. As to the number of inhabitants who have dwelt on the earth during that period it is a pretty difficult matter to form any correct idea in relation to it; I do not think that any statistician could tell this to any degree of correctness. It is a kind of a given point in these days to say that the population of the earth is about a thousand millions, and that this number pass away every generation. It is also estimated that about three generations pass away in a century; this gives three thousand millions in a century, thirty thousand millions in a thousand years, and one hundred and eighty thousand millions in six thousand years,—about the period that is supposed to have elapsed since the creation of man upon the earth. Whether these statistics are anything like correct it is not of much importance to discuss; but it is an important reflection, that Brother Benson, who has been associated with us so many years, is one of the chosen few, of all the immense numbers who have dwelt on the face of the earth, who have been called to hold the office of apostles. Well might the prophet say "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet," &c.

I will say that in my boyhood while attending Sabbath School in my native State, Connecticut, there seemed something glorious, to me, about the apostles of Jesus Christ who were called to preach the gospel of the Son of God to the inhabitants of the earth; and I have many times felt that I would willingly walk a thousand miles to see a prophet, an apostle or any man called of God who could teach me the way to be saved; a man who held in his hands the power of the priesthood, who could command the elements and they would obey him, and who could declare the words of life in their truth and purity to the inhabitants of the earth. I always looked upon the lives and missions of these men, though despised by the world generally, as the most important of any men who ever dwelt in the flesh. Jesus himself was called master of the house of Belzebub, and travelled through a constant scene of poverty, ridicule, persecution and affliction; yet there was something great, good, grand and glorious in the life of the Savior of the world. This was the fate of Him and His apostles; and though they descended below all things they held in their hands the destiny and salvation, not only of that generation but of all the human race; and woe be to that house, nation, kindred, tongue or people who rejected their words and testimony, for they will rise in judgment against them.

From the days of my childhood until I heard the fulness of the gospel, as taught by the Latter-day Saints, I had a great desire to live to see a prophet or apostle. I have lived to see this day. I have lived to see the church and kingdom of God on the earth, with all its gifts, graces, power, glory and dominion, revealed and organized by the ministrations of angels from God in heaven and by the revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have lived to see apostles and the full organization of the priesthood again officiating in and administering the ordinances of salvation to the children of men.

Brother Ezra T. Benson, whose death has occurred so unexpectedly, was one of the few called in this day to bear testimony to the nations of the earth of the restoration of this gospel and he has traveled many thousands of miles to do so. He has been true and faithful unto death, and he will receive a crown of life. He has gone from our midst to the spirit world to mingle with the Gods, or at least with his brethren who have gone before him; whether he will mingle with the Gods until after the resurrection perhaps it is not for me to say. He has gone home to receive his reward. What a cloud of reflection it brings to the mind! It speaks in loud language to every apostle,