

## DISCOURSE

By Elder ORSON PRATT, Delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, Sept. 22, 1872.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

HAVING been requested to address the congregation this afternoon I do so with the greatest cheerfulness. There is one passage of Scripture I would like very much to take as a text, if I knew where to find it. It is somewhere in the book of Jeremiah or Ezekiel. I have not time now to look it up, and perhaps it would be better to take some other text having a bearing on the same subject. The text to which I would like to direct the attention of the people has reference to the colonization of this country by one of the descendants of Zedekiah, king of Judah. It reads something like this: "Thus saith the Lord God, I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent in the mountain of the height of Israel, will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell."

We read of the fulfillment of this prophecy in the Book of Mormon; but because I cannot direct your attention to the passage, I will read another text, which will be found in the 11th verse of the 85th Psalm: "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven."

Forty-five years ago this morning this prophecy, so far as it relates to "truth springing out of the earth," was fulfilled. Forty-five years ago, early this morning, plates resembling gold were taken from the earth, the morning, if I recollect right, of the 22nd of September, 1827. Owing to that great event the Territory of Utah is now settled by the people called Latter-day Saints. Owing to the fulfillment of this prophecy this Tabernacle has been built here in these mountains; and had it not been for that event it is probable that Utah Territory would still have been a desert, a barren, solitary, uninhabited district of country. Sometimes great things are accomplished and grow out of things that appear very small in their nature. It has been so in relation to this prophecy. "Truth shall spring out of the earth."

In order that the meaning of these words may be more fully understood it may not be amiss to read the context or the passages preceding. The psalmist commences:

Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people: thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

Thou hast taken away all thy wrath; thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?

Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.

I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly.

Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.

Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of his steps.

Thus reads the 85th psalm. It is very evident that the psalmist David, being filled with the spirit of prophecy, saw the condition of the people of Israel, saw also that they would be under the displeasure of the Almighty for many generations, and he prays that the Lord would look upon them in compassion and turn himself from the fierceness of his anger, that it might not be drawn out towards them to all generations, and he utters this prayer: "Turn us, O God of our salvation, and show unto us thy mercy," etc. The Lord, in answer to this prayer, promised to speak peace to his people, but said he, "Let them not turn again unto folly." And then he informs them how he would speak peace unto them, and how he would turn himself from the fierceness of his anger, that his anger might not be drawn out unto them to all generations. He informs them that he would commence this great work, that should result in peace and salvation to Israel, by causing truth to spring out of the earth, at which time righteousness should look down from heaven. Righteousness, and truth, and peace should kiss one another, and the Lord should cause the land of Israel again to yield its increase. We know how barren, sterile and uninhabitable is the land that was once promised to that chosen people. The Lord has not only cursed the people and made them a hiss and a byword among all the nations whither they have been driven, but his anger has also been upon their land. He has withheld the rains of heaven, and has cursed it with barrenness and sterility; and the cities which once covered its face and reared their lofty spires to heaven, now

lie in ruins, and scarcely a vestige of some of them can be found. But when the Lord should cause truth to spring forth out of the earth, he would speak peace to his people and to their land, and it should yield its increase; and truth should go before him and should set them in the way of his steps.

We have been proclaiming for forty-two years this Book of Mormon, which we have declared has sprung forth from the earth by the power of the Almighty, for the benefit, first of the gentile nations. The proclamation, according to the words of the book, must go forth to all people, nations and tongues under the whole heavens, called the gentile nations, after which the Lord has promised in numerous places in this record that it should go to the remnants of the house of Israel. But that which the Lord intends to accomplish first by the bringing forth of this book, is the redemption of as many as will hearken to its words in all the gentile nations of the earth, and to gather them together in one; for not only are the house of Israel and the house of Judah to be gathered back to their own lands, but all Christians throughout the whole earth are to be gathered in one in the latter days, according to a prophecy which you will find in the 43rd chapter of Isaiah: "I will bring them from the east, and gather them from the west. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name." This has reference to the sons and daughters of the living God, to the people called Saints; not particularly to the literal seed of the house of Israel, but to all those who believe in him, and who are called by his name. All must be gathered; all must come from the ends of the earth. No Christians will be left, scattered abroad over the nations, as many suppose will be the case so long as time lasts. A complete and full gathering together of the people of God must take place in the latter days, called, by Paul, the dispensation of the fullness of times. You will find this prediction in the first chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians. Paul there declares that a new dispensation must come in and he denominates it the dispensation of the fullness of times. He tells us that in that dispensation the Lord will gather together in one all things in Christ. Every person that believes in, and has put on Christ by baptism and by repentance of sin, must be gathered in one in that dispensation; not only those on earth, but those in heaven—all the congregations who are in Christ, who have dwelt on the earth in former ages, are to be united with those who are in the flesh on the earth. One great, vast, general assembly of all that are in Christ—the dead as well as the living—from the days of Adam down until the work is completed.

In order to commence this great work the Lord has brought forth truth out of the earth. He will speak peace to his people, and they are requested by the Psalmist, when the Lord undertakes to do this work, never to turn again unto folly.

Now I will attempt to give a brief account to my hearers of how Joseph Smith obtained the plates of the Book of Mormon from the earth. He was but a lad, a farmer's boy, when the Lord began to speak to him and send his angels to him, being not quite fifteen years of age. He was almost too young to be a brazen-faced impostor, was he not? Cast your eyes around on this congregation for the youth of fifteen, and see if you think it would be possible for one of that early age to become of the most barefaced impostors that the world ever heard of, for Joseph Smith was thus regarded by the world at large with few exceptions; and he must have been so, at a very early age, if this work be not true, for he could not be deceived, himself, in relation to it. There was no possible chance for any deception, so far as he himself was concerned. Why? Because the circumstances were of such a nature that he could not be deceived. God revealed to him that there were certain plates deposited about three miles from his father's house. He saw, in vision, the place of their deposit. He heard the holy angel declare to him in relation to these records. But first, about four years prior to this, the first vision that he had was in answer to prayer. Being but a youth, and anxious for the salvation of his soul, he secretly prayed, in the wilderness, that the Lord would show unto him what he should do, what church he should join. The Lord heard and answered this prayer. Do not be astonished, good Christians, because the Lord hears prayer in the 19th century. I know it is very popular to pray to the Lord in Christendom; but when you talk about the Lord answering prayers, by giving revelations, visions, or sending angels, it is very unpopular. But unpopular as it was, this youth ventured to go and ask the Lord for wisdom, having, in the first place, read a passage in the New Testament, which says, "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given unto him." Joseph Smith was not so full of tradition that he could not lay hold of this promise. I do not know that he had been taught long enough, the idea that the Lord would not hear prayer. At any rate, having read this passage, he prayed, really believing in his heart that the Lord would answer him, for he wanted wisdom, he wanted to know which was the true Chris-

tian Church, that he might be united with it; and while pleading with and praying to the Lord for this information, which was a matter of great concern to him, the heavens were opened, and two personages clothed in light or fire descended and stood before him. As soon as this light surrounded him, and he was enclosed or enveloped in it, his mind was caught away from earthly objects and things, and he saw these two glorious personages, their countenances shining with exceeding great brilliancy. One of them, while pointing to the other, addressed him in this language, "Behold my beloved son, hear ye him." All fear was taken from this boy during the progress of this wonderful event, and he felt happy, but anxious to know concerning the things about which he had been praying, and he repeated his request, that he might be told which was the true Christian church. He was informed that there was no true Christian church on the earth, that there was no people established or organized according to the Apostolic order; that all had gone out of the way and had departed from the ancient order of things; that they had denied the power of Godliness, the gifts, miracles, the spirit of revelation and prophecy, visions, that all these things had been done away with by the unbelief of the children of men, and that there were no prophets or inspired men on the earth, as there always had been when there was a true church upon the earth. He was strictly commanded to join none of them. The Lord also informed him that, at some future period of time, if he would be faithful in giving heed to the instructions which were then imparted to him, and in his prayers to the Lord, he would impart to him his own doctrine in plainness and simplicity.

Some four years passed away from this time, making this boy not quite nineteen years of age, and on one Sunday evening he returned to his bed room, pondering upon the promise that had been given to him, and he began praying earnestly again that the Lord would show him the true gospel of his son, according to the promise; and while he was thus praying in his father's house in his chamber, a light burst into the room, becoming brighter by degrees, shining and then partially withdrawing, so that fear did not take possession of his bosom to any great degree. As he continued praying the light became brighter and brighter, and finally a personage clothed in a white robe stood before him. This personage was a little above the size of common men at the present day, and his arms and feet were partially bare. His feet did not stand on the floor of the room, but a certain distance above, and his countenance shone like lightning. This angel appeared so pleasant, beautiful and glorious, and his countenance radiated such happiness on the mind of this young lad that all fear was taken from him as on the former occasion. This personage told him that he was an angel of God and that he had been sent, in answer to his prayer, with a very important message to deliver to him; that God designed to accomplish a great work on the earth, and that he was to be a chosen instrument in laying the foundation of, and establishing this work. He commenced telling him about the ancient inhabitants of this continent. He told him that the present American Indians were the descendants of Israel; that their forefathers were brought here from Jerusalem about six centuries before Christ; that when they came they were a righteous people and had prophets among them; that when they landed on this continent they commenced, by the commandment of the Lord, keeping a record of their history, their prophecies and sacred doings upon metallic plates; that that nation, after having dwelt here about a thousand years, fell into great wickedness; that they divided themselves into two great nations; that the portion that had these plates, the Nephites, had so far apostatized from the Lord, that he threatened their overthrow, and to destroy them if they did not repent; that the prophets went forth among them prophesying that if they did not repent, the other nation, called Lamanites, would destroy them from the face of the land. But they would not repent, and Mormon, a prophet who lived at that time, was commanded of the Lord to take all the plates that were kept of the records of his fathers, and make an abridgment of them upon a new set of plates. So he commenced and abridged their history, from the time they left Jerusalem until that period, incorporating therein many of the prophecies and revelations given during that thousand years. After having made this abridgment he committed it into the hands of his son Moroni, knowing that his nation would be destroyed, and that Moroni, according to the revelations God had given him, would be spared to keep the records, and to behold the downfall of his nation. Mormon hid the records from which he made this abridgment in a hill, called the hill Cumorah, that being its ancient name, and this hill was about three miles from where this young man resided, in the town of Manchester, Ontario County, State of New York. There all the records were deposited, and according to the Book of Mormon they must have been very numerous indeed. The history of the ancient inhabitants of this land was kept by their kings, and the records became very voluminous; and they were all deposited by the Prophet Mormon in that hill; but the abridgment from which the Book of Mormon was taken was given into the hands of his son Moroni, to

finish out the record. The last date given on these records was 420 years after Christ.

You may inquire how the people on this land knew about the birth of Christ. I will say that they understood Christianity on this western hemisphere as well as on the eastern hemisphere. They were not left in darkness here concerning the Savior of the world and his atonement. They knew all about it. How? Jesus, who is the God of the whole earth, appeared to them after his crucifixion, and resurrection from the dead. He showed them the wounds in his hands, feet and side, and delivered to them his gospel in its plainness and fullness, and they were commanded to write it on plates. They knew also, of his birth, in the land of their forefathers, by the signs which God gave to them on this land. They were told that at the time of the birth of Jesus there should be two days and one night without any darkness at all; they should see the sun go down at night and rise in the morning, and that during the whole of that time it should be light as day. They commenced the reckoning of their time from that period. Previous to that time they had reckoned their time from the date of their leaving Jerusalem, precisely six hundred years before the birth of Christ. Four hundred and twenty years after that great event the Prophet Moroni informs us that he also was commanded to hide up this abridgment in the same hill, but in another part of it, in which his father Mormon hid up the sacred records. And the Lord made a promise to Moroni, also to Mormon, and to many other prophets who dwelt on this land in previous generations, that these plates should never be destroyed, but that they should be preserved by his hand, and that they should be brought forth out of the earth in the latter days, for the purpose of bringing about the gathering of his people from the ends of the earth, and the bringing in of the fullness of the gentiles and fulfilling their times, after which the translation of these records should go to all the remnants of the house of Israel, scattered abroad on the face of the whole earth; and that these records should be instrumental in the hands of God in gathering Israel from the four quarters of the earth.

These were the promises of God to the ancient prophets of this continent, and this angel told Joseph Smith concerning these plates, and where they were deposited. At the same time, the vision of the Almighty was open to the mind of Joseph, and he saw the very spot. After the angel had conversed with him sometime on this subject, and had opened up to him the prophecies of the holy prophets concerning the great work that was to be accomplished in the latter days, he withdrew, and Joseph continued praying. Some, perhaps, might think that this was a dream; but it was not; he was wide awake. As he continued praying, the angel came again the second time, and gave him still further information concerning the rise of the latter-day kingdom of God upon the earth, and the great work the Almighty intended to accomplish preparatory to the coming of his Son from the heavens with all his Saints. The angel then again withdrew, but in answer to Joseph's prayers he came the third time, and imparted to him still more information. After his withdrawal the third time Joseph arose, and it was early in the morning, he having been awake all night receiving instruction from the angel of God. In the morning he went out into the field to work with his father. He had not yet told his father of the remarkable things that he had seen during the night; but his father noticed that he looked weak and feeble, and advised him to go to the house. He started to do so, and while on the way, the angel again appeared to him, and commanded him to return to his father and tell him all about it. He did so, and his father, on hearing it, burst into tears, and said, "My son, be not disobedient to this heavenly vision!" The angel, when he appeared to him in daylight, told him not only to tell his father, but also to go to the place shown him in vision the night previous, and see the plates. His father told him by all means to be obedient and faithful. He went according to the instruction of the angel and visited this hill. The hill runs north and south some three quarters of a mile, and on one end of it, or near the end of it, was where he saw the plates. The surface of the stone which covered the plates was bare; around its edges was a thick greenward of grass or turf. He knew the place as soon as he saw it, and procuring a lever he lifted off this principal or crowning stone, and found that it was cemented on the top of four stones that sat on edge, forming a stone box. After having lifted off the stone he saw the plates, just as he had seen them in vision the night before. These plates rested upon three little cement pillars that ran up from the bottom, and the stones that formed the sides of the box were cemented together at the corners.

With the plates was an instrument, called the urim and thummim, used by seers in ancient times and which enabled them to understand the things of God. The great high priest used such an instrument in the midst of Israel on the other continent, and inquired of the Lord to receive sentence of judgment in difficult cases that were brought before him to be judged. Aaron had a urim and thummim in the centre of his breastplate; and when the cases were brought before him, the breast plate of judgment, containing the urim and thummim, was consulted, and whatever