

DISCOURSE

BY FARLEY P. PRATT, BOWERY, OCT. 7, 1855.

[REPORTED BY GEO. D. WATT.]

We wish the entire attention of the congregation; the assembly being so vast, it will almost be impossible for the speaker to be heard unless there is great order and strict attention. We wish no disturbance on the outskirts of the assembly, as we wish all to hear.

I will read for the edification of the assembly a portion of the 21st chap. of Luke, contained in what is called King James' translation of the New Testament, from the 5th to the 36th verse.

I will remind those who hear me this day of one fact which can be clearly demonstrated to the mind of every careful reader of the scriptures, and which fact is a guarantee, as it were, to the rational mind, for the manner of the fulfillment of that which is future; it is this, that the prophecies contained in the Holy Bible, spoken by Moses, and the prophets, Jesus and the apostles, have been fulfilled literally and naturally, so far as they have been fulfilled at all. Not in the sense, however, that modern blindness and priestcraft have tried to throw over them, but in a plain and common sense, as plain as if a man were to rise here and tell that the wall around this Temple Block would be overthrown and not one stone left upon another, and then tell the circumstances that would transpire before it, and in connection with it, and after it, and they it afterwards be fulfilled and recorded in history; so plain, so clear, so full, and so exact have the predictions of the prophets of God, and the apostles of God, and of the Son of God, been fulfilled, except such portions as remain to be fulfilled.

Keep that one fact in view, and then search the prophecies, and trace them out; search history for their fulfillment, and give diligent heed to the things that are written, for these are the commandments not only of the ancient apostles and prophets, but of the apostles and prophets of the last days.

Jesus himself, while he traveled upon the earth in his mortal tabernacle, read the scriptures to the people, "he opened the book and taught;" his manner was to do it in the synagogue every Sabbath day—he exhorted them to search into the things that were written.

And after he had risen from the dead, and received all power in heaven and on earth, he referred his disciples to that which was written.

On a certain occasion he said, "O fools and slow of heart to believe that which the prophets have written."

When he appeared to the Nephites, in his risen body, as you will find it written in the Book of Mormon, he took pains to refer them to the written prophecies of Isaiah and many others, and quoted many of them, and exhorted the people to search the things contained in the prophecies of Isaiah diligently, bearing testimony of their literal fulfillment; and said he, "A commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently," for they have been fulfilled, and will be fulfilled according to that which is written, not in some other way.

Not only are we included in these general exhortations and commandments of the ancients, and of Jesus Christ himself, but the same commandments have been renewed to us by our great prophet and founder, Joseph Smith, and by our prophets and apostles that still live.

How often have they told us to treasure up the words of God, those things that are written for our profit and learning, and to search diligently and treasure up in our hearts continually words of wisdom from the best books.

Says the word of God through Joseph Smith to this people, Search the scriptures, treasure them up in your hearts, put them in a good store house, the store house of your memory; then the Holy Spirit will be at liberty when you are called up to teach others to select from that well stored treasure things new and old.

It is not to study up what you shall say particularly, but to treasure up truth in your hearts, to have them well filled with it, kept well stored, and then give free liberty to the Spirit of God to operate upon you, to collect out of that treasure that portion which will be best suited to the wants and condition of men who do not treasure up the words of life.

If the Holy Spirit should come upon a man of that description to select out of that store house, he would find it empty, and he would have the trouble of putting it there, or it would not be there; hence he would be barren and unfruitful.

Search the scriptures, ye saints of the Most High; among all your cares and all your duties, search the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, of the Book of Mormon, and the revelations of God that have been written for our profit and learning.

And to the young people among us, a generation brought up amid the hurry, toil and cares of a new country, I say do not neglect to treasure up in your hearts the history, and the prophecies and their fulfillment, and the promises, and hopes shadowed forth therein, and the doctrines, and principles, and examples left on record.

You may say you have not time; take those portions of time you would otherwise devote to something less useful. We all have time to do it. I have been as hard working in my day as any other man, perhaps, and I always had time to do it, and always have done it, and it was by the light that shone in a dark place diligently and prayerfully searched out, and the Holy Spirit that shone upon the understanding, through the prayer of faith, and through diligent search that caused me to see, and understand, and lay hold on certain things that came in fulfillment of these prophecies.

If any one asks how I came to be a Latter Day Saint, or what some people would call a Mormon, a follower of Joseph Smith, the modern prophet, I answer, it was because I had given heed to the sentiments of truth from my early youth, carefully and prayerfully searching and

believing them; it was because the Holy Spirit rested upon me, and opened my understanding to the same through the prayer of faith and diligent search; it was because the Holy Spirit gave me clearly to understand that this modern prophet, and the fullness of the gospel restored by him, had come in fulfillment of certain promises made by the ancient prophets and apostles; that is the reason why I really embraced the fullness of the gospel which the world calls Mormonism.

Let us review the things we have read, and make a few remarks upon them.

Some of the disciples, feeling proud of their great temple, or national house of God, and feeling to rejoice in its workmanship, beauty, grandeur, and probably flattering themselves it would endure forever as the great centre of the Jewish worship for all nations, they called the attention of Jesus to it, saying, "Master, see what manner of stones and buildings are here." "Why," said Jesus, "the days will come when there will not be left one of these stones on the top of another."

Does that need spiritualizing? Does it need some learned man from a college to tell you what that means, and give you the spiritual sense of it? It had but one sense, and that a child could understand.

"The days will come that there will not be one of those beautiful stones left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." In the Indian phraseology they inquired how many moons first, or in other words, "Master, when shall these things be, and what sign will there be when these things transpire?" Jesus begins to tell them some of the things that would immediately happen in their day.

The first thing he calls their attention to, among the things that had been transpiring, was, that a great many deceivers should come and profess to be Christ, saying, "I am Christ, but do not go after them, take care and not be deceived by them."

The reason of this was that the Jews were looking for a Messiah, and for a deliverance from the Roman yoke, and for their national independence to be restored to them; and for their city and temple and nation, to be the seat of government for all nations, a universal theocracy.

They were looking for this, and they had rejected the true Messiah, and were about to kill him, and were looking for another to fulfil what all men were in the expectation of; for the old prophets had told them that such a day would come in relation to that nation, and their city Jerusalem, and the temple; that the throne of God would be there; that the tabernacle of God would be there; that there would be one King and one Lord, and his name one; that all the nations of the earth would come up to worship.—the nations they were acquainted with in that country.

They had reason to look for that day, because the old prophets had foretold it, and John the Baptist came along as a special prophet, and nearly all that people had received him as a prophet, professedly, though in reality, some of them received him, and he told them some of those things were about to be fulfilled.

He had told them about their King, about the Lamb of God, about the Messiah, and that they must repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, and make his paths strait.

With this double assurance, first the testimony of their old prophets, and secondly the renewed testimony of a new prophet to immediately prepare for the fulfillment of some of the old prophecies: with this double assurance they were looking for somebody to do something, and that pretty largely too; and as they had rejected the true king—the true Messiah, of course they would be looking for somebody, that ambitious spirits would enter, and they would rise up and tell the people, "I am he you look for; set me up, and I will deliver you from the Roman yoke, I will break your fetters, and bring about the restoration of your national independence."

Don't you be deceived, says Jesus, for many of those who would not hearken to me will come, saying, "I am Christ," but do not go after them. These very things happened in those days, for which you may read history.

When you hear of wars and commotion, be not terrified, for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not yet; nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, which had been a common thing, and was then; great earthquakes, and famine, and pestilence, and great sights from heaven.

Go and read Josephus, and read about these things being fulfilled in that same age.

But before all these things shall take place, they shall lay their hands upon you.

Some people have been in the habit of trying to apply every scripture to every body in every age; they had need to give heed to the exhortation of Paul to Timothy, "Show thyself a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, giving to every one their portion," not everything that is written for every body in every age.

Jesus was talking to Peter, James, and John, and to the rest of his immediate followers. "They will lay their hands on you, Peter, on you, James, and on you, John, and also upon others, and they will persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, and you shall be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake." All of which I need not observe, was literally fulfilled in that age, the New Testament itself bearing record of it in part; "this shall turn to you for a testimony." That is as much as to say, when this happens to you that I have foretold, it will be a witness and a testimony—it will be another proof; therefore, instead of mourning about it, and feeling down-hearted, understand that I have before told you it must be. And when you are brought before rulers for my name's sake, do not study up a speech beforehand to speak in self-defence, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to gainsay nor resist.

Read the New Testament—the history of Peter and the Twelve, of Stephen and of Paul, and see if they had not a mouth and wisdom that confounded their enemies when they were afterwards summoned before the different authorities, and kings, and magistrates in fulfillment of this promise.

"Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." This was fulfilled in the circumstances of James, the brother of the Lord, whom they killed with the sword, according to the New Testament. It was fulfilled in the case of Peter, in the case of the stoning of Stephen to death; it was fulfilled literally in many instances in that age.

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." Nations were not singing the name of Jesus then as they are now by tradition, but the bare mention of his name gave a shock to the wicked, to kings and rulers.

Go to Illinois and Missouri, and mention Joseph Smith to the mob that tried to butcher and kill him, and drive the saints; go where they reside, and say, Joseph Smith the prophet, and it would not cause a greater shock, greater rage and hate, more bitter feelings than it would in those days to mention the name of that crucified Nazarene; "ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake," that is, because you will be running from place to place, making use of my name, making mention of what nearly everybody considers the name of an impostor and a deceiver.

"That deceiver said he would rise again from the dead on the third day," said some of those pious Jews after they had killed him, applying the same terms they now apply to the modern martyrs.

To go about and preach his name then was not that pleasant thing it is now in Christendom; I assure you, it was a cross, and nothing but the Spirit of truth inspired in the heart of man would give him boldness enough to do it. "But there shall not a hair of your head perish; in your patience possess ye your souls."

Now, then, comes the thing the apostles asked about, after he had told them the preliminary leading to it, filling up the interstices of time, he gets at length to the destruction of that temple.—to the throwing down of those beautiful stones. "When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know the desolation thereof is nigh." Does that need any spiritualizing?

Go and read Josephus, read the history of the Roman army under Titus, the Roman general, who came up and laid siege against that city and surrounded it with the Roman legions; and then read the history of the war. It took place at the time when almost the whole nation had poured into that devoted city, just as you have poured into Salt Lake City, only we are a mere handful compared with that great nation; they had come in to one of the great conferences that happened about once a year; it was during the time that tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands that came into Jerusalem from all the surrounding country that they were laid siege to by the Roman army.

The city was blockaded—none could escape. Besides this there were several factions within the city; Jews were at war with Jews under different leaders. This made a desolating war within, while the enemy was encamped without; and besides all this, famine overtook them, and pestilence caused by want, and by being crowded and shut up in the city, and by the dead bodies with no place to bury them.

Hence with sword, famine, pestilence, &c., Jerusalem began to be desolated. "Now when you see this, understand that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter therein."

Some of our sectarian friends tell us that Jesus Christ did not preach a gathering; he only preached the gospel, and then let the people live right where they had a mind to. But here is a positive revelation from the Son of God to those that would give heed to his warning voice to actually remove to the mountains in order to escape the war, the troubles and pestilence that awaited the Jews and Jerusalem.

Now if we had all the history of those times; if we only had what the Apostles have written, in full, instead of a little of it, we should have the particular place where they did go, and where they lived, you would have an account of the organization of a gathered people taking care of themselves, while war desolated the nation. We have not got this part of ancient history, but we will have it, for there is nothing secret but what will be revealed—hid but what will be brought to light.

When God sees fit we will have the record of the fulfillment of this gathering; of every man, woman and child that heeded the warning of the blessed Jesus.

About seventy years after the birth of Christ, which was about the date that the Roman army compassed Jerusalem, I warrant you they left Judea and Jerusalem, and gathered into the mountains to take care of themselves. This is the very period of Christian history I would much like to read—how they conducted themselves when they were gathered together, and how they maintained themselves when their nation and temple were crumbling to the dust.

"Let them that are in the midst of it depart out, and let not them that are in the country enter therein." We are given to understand that there was a little time after the Roman army had laid siege to Jerusalem, in consequence of a certain movement of that army that gave a chance to the people in the city that were wide awake to gather. If they would give heed to the warning voice of Jesus, or to the words of his apostles not to come down from the house top, or stop to get their bed, but run with all their might, they could escape. A little moment of relaxation, an advantageous position of the army made escape

possible to those who would not stop to take their clothes out of the house, their bed, or anything else, but flee at once.

"For these be the days of vengeance." Vengeance on what? On the people of the Jews and on all the people of Jerusalem, that had rejected the gospel, that had rejected and killed the true Messiah, and persecuted and killed the apostles, and his disciples.

"These be the days of vengeance." What for? That all things that were written may be fulfilled, not spiritualized, nor transformed, nor done away, but absolutely fulfilled.

What did he mean by that saying? Go and read Moses; I shall not trouble myself to give chapter and verse; go and read Moses and the prophets and see if they do not predict the horrors of war to that age, and desolation, even to the eating of their own children for mere want, because of the pressure of the famine; even the tender and delicate women, says Moses, who would not venture to put the soles of their feet on the ground for tenderness and delicacy, should eat their own children in the siege and the straits whereby your enemies shall distress you in all your gates, if you will not hearken to my words. He also predicted that the Lord God would raise up a prophet like unto him, and the people should hear him in all things whatsoever he should say unto them, and every soul that would not hear him, should be cut off from among the people.

What do our enemies complain of us about? For believing we must hearken to the prophet of the Lord which we profess to have among us—Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young, or whoever it may be. They believe, say our enemies, that they must hearken to their prophet in all things whatsoever he shall say unto them. Just as tho' it was a new thing—that is what they are mad at us about; it is the main point that is found fault with from California to Maine, and throughout Europe, by editors and priests.

Everywhere the word is, "what is the matter with the Mormons in Utah?—they hold to that abominable principle of hearkening to all things the prophet of God says to them." O dear, what hurt does that do? It gives them power—they will all vote one way.

We are not the only people that are troubled with that doctrine, and this is not the only age that has had that kind of trouble to contend with. Moses had laid it down, that they should not only give heed to his word, and if they did not, they should be destroyed, and have to eat their own children while their enemies besieged them, but that they should give heed also to another prophet that should arise, and that too in all things whatsoever he should say unto them; and if they did not, they should be cut off from among the people.

But that part of Mormonism is very ancient, and applied to Moses, and to Christ, and to every prophet that has ever been sent to lead the people.

"These be the days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled." I have quoted a little of what has been written.

"But woe unto them that are with child and to those that give suck in those days." What kind of a woe is this? Eternal hell, says one.—That is not the meaning; but the language signifies that it will be hard on those who are in that situation in those days; they will have trouble because they will not be in circumstances to flee from their enemies; it will be very inconvenient indeed for them to escape; therefore sorrow to them; it will be hard on them; they are to be pitied.

I used to think when I was a boy, that every time the scriptures said woe, it meant eternal hell. I did not understand very much of the scriptures then; in this instance Christ was simply speaking of the trouble and inconvenience it would be to those who had little children.

I have often thought how much more merciful God is to the Latter Day Saints in telling them not to go in haste nor by flight without stopping to get their coat, their garment or their bed; he has not told them to escape empty-handed; I feel thankful for this mercy.

On the other hand, I have thought that we have had some burdens to bear over and above what they had, which makes the thing about even.

"For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people." That is, in the land of Judea, upon the Jews, and in that city.

"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and they shall be led away captive among all nations, and Jerusalem"—what will become of it finally?—shall be trodden down of the gentiles, until—that is a big word, and means much in the position it occupies here—until—on that word is suspended that nation's fate, and the fate of all the neighboring nations; "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the gentiles, until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled."

I tell you there is meaning in these words, contained in that single line. O ye nations of the earth, if I had the voice of an angel's trumpet, that I could be heard to earth's remotest bounds, by kings, rulers, captains, generals, armies and nations, I would wish to read that one line in their ears, and tell them the things that are summed up in it.

"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the gentiles until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled." What is meant by it? One thing we know certain, we have no need to conjecture—that is, that all these things happened literally. The Roman army on the outside, and the three factions on the inside of the city of Jerusalem, and the famine and the pestilence helping it on, performed their work until finally it came to an end by the city being taken by the Romans, the temple set on fire, and burned, and the whole city desolated, and brought under gentile rule, namely, Roman rule. And it is said in the history written by Josephus that one million and a half of Jews perished in that siege, that is in that one city, in putting an end to a national polity; a national corrupted form of government, a national priesthood, a national house of worship.