

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER ORSON PRATT,

DELIVERED

In the Sixteenth Ward Meeting-rooms, Nov. 22nd, 1873.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

I WILL read the first ten verses of the 20th chapter of the revelations given to St. John, the "beloved disciple," while on the Isle of Patmos.

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

"And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

"And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

In the words which I have read, we have perhaps as much revealed in regard to the Millennium, as we will find in any of the revelations which God has given to man. We can understand from these words that a time is to come in which the devil will have no power to tempt the children of men, and this happy period will last for one thousand years. There never has been a period since the creation, but what the devil has had more or less power or influence over the inhabitants of our world. Such has been the case from the day that he came before our first parents in the Garden of Eden, until the present. We have an account, however, of a period of time, when he had not much dominion, that was in the days of the flood. After the wicked were destroyed there were eight persons in the ark, sailing upon the waters, over whom I presume Satan had very little power. With the exception of this short period, in which the earth was submerged and the ark was sailing upon the waters, the devil has exercised power over the hearts of the children of men in all ages and countries. There seems to be a very great amount of evil in existence at the present time, for people are being continually stirred up to commit all manner of abomination—robbery, murder, blaspheming the name of the Deity, and the violation of every command that he has ever given. There is a time, however, to come, when this earth will be depopulated of the wicked to the same extent as it once was by the waters of the flood. The waters then made an entire sweep of the wicked, they were laid low, and the earth was cleansed. We might, in other words, call it a baptism of the earth by water, or a cleansing of it from sin. You know that baptism is intended for the remission of sins; it is the ordinance through which our Heavenly Father forgives the sins of those who believe in his Son Jesus Christ. The promise of forgiveness, how-

ever, is on condition that we believe in the atonement made by the Savior, that we repent of our sins, and that we are baptized or immersed in water for the remission thereof. That was the way with our earth. Some eighteen hundred or two thousand years after the fall our earth was immersed in water and every sin was swept from the face of it, the same as your sins were forgiven when you acknowledged your belief in the atonement of the Son of God and were baptized by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins. There seems to be a similarity then, so far as these ordinances are concerned, between the inhabitants of the earth who are saved and the earth itself; there is also a similarity, in the process of creation, between the earth and its inhabitants. The earth when created, according to the accounts we have, was covered with a flood of waters; no dry land, in fact no land at all, appeared, but a flood of waters seemed to encompass it. By and by, in the providence of God, in what way we know not, this flood of waters was gathered together into one place, and the dry land appeared, emerging from the waters. This was the birth of creation, the same as we are born here into this world, from one element into another. After having been brought forth from the element of water, the process of creation, or the further development of the earth continued. It did not come forth perfect in every respect at the time of birth, it had to undergo other processes necessary to prepare it for the abode of man. It seems, from the account contained in the first of Genesis, that the earth was not only immersed in a flood of waters, but that darkness was upon the face of the earth, that is, the earth seemed to be enclosed or enveloped in darkness. The cause of this darkness, in King James' translation, is not fully revealed. There is a translation, however, that was given by inspiration, which makes the subject more clear and plain, and more easy to be understood, than the uninspired translation that is generally called King James' translation of the Bible. This inspired translation by the prophet Joseph Smith, says—"I the Lord God created darkness upon the face of the great deep, and I, God, said let there be light, and there was light, and the evening and the morning were the first day." This makes it very plain compared with the old uninspired translation. I will repeat the quotation, "I, the Lord God, created darkness upon the face of the great deep."

It would seem, that light had been shining previous to this time. The universe, probably was lighted up, so far as it existed, and that light shone forth over the face of this embryo creation. Where that light came from or how it was produced is not mentioned; but the Lord was obliged to create darkness in order to envelop the earth therein. There are many ways in which this might have been accomplished. The sun was not permitted to shine forth on the first, second, or third day of creation, but on the fourth day it was permitted to give its light to the earth. Whether the sun shone upon the face of this creation, before the Lord created darkness, is not for me to say. If it did, it would be an easy matter for him to withhold the rays of that bright luminary in such a manner as seemed good in his sight, the same as he did among the ancient Nephites who dwelt on this continent at the time of the crucifixion. During the three days and three nights that our Savior was in the tomb, thick darkness covered the face of this land, so that there was no light of the sun, neither of the moon, nor stars; and so great was the darkness during that period, that the inhabitants who had not fallen could feel it. The Lord had some method by which he created or produced that darkness by shading the earth from the rays of the sun; but by and by he said, "Let there be light," and light was again restored.

Now these two states of being in which our earth existed are called first, the evening, and second, the morning, and the evening and the morning were the first day. Whether the day here mentioned was a period such as the one to which we now apply that term, we are not informed in the Bible; but from what has been revealed to the Latter-day Saints we have great reason to believe that it was a very long period of time, and that this darkness existed over the face of the great deep for a long time. It might have been for many centuries; we have no

definite information on this point. We find that, after the dry land appeared by the gathering together of the waters in one place, God created a firmament, dividing the waters from the waters—the waters that were above the firmament from the waters that were beneath. We do not exactly understand the meaning of this. If we had the process of creation unfolded to us, we should probably find that many of the materials of our globe once existed in a dispersed or scattered form, in a state of chaos, and that the Lord, in collecting them together, brought them from a distance in the solar system, and that in so doing, he took his own time and way, and wrought according to his own laws, for, as far as we are acquainted, the Lord works by law, and why not create by law? I do not mean make out of nothing. I hope that none of my audience will suppose for a moment that I believe in such an absurdity as this. There is not a hint in all the Bible that God created this or any other world out of nothing. The work of creation was to take the materials that existed from all eternity, that never were created or made out of nothing, to take these self-existent materials and organize them into a world. This is called creation. There is, however, a declaration made by many religious people, that "God created all things out of nothing." They even teach it in their Sunday schools; but they have never been able to prove any such thing. It is one of those ideas which have got into the minds of people through the teachings of uninspired men. The ancients—those who lived many centuries before Christ, did not believe this doctrine; but since the days of Christ, and since the days of the great apostasy, they have got up the idea that God made all things out of nothing, and they have incorporated it into their disciplines, catechisms, Sunday school books, and various works which they have published. The Scriptures say—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The word "create" does not mean make out of nothing. For instance, when he says—"I created darkness and I created light," what does he do? Does he absolutely form light out of nothing? No, he causes the light that existed from all eternity to shine where darkness existed, and it is like creating light, the same as you, when you attend meeting, lock up your house and blow out the lights. When you return, supposing you say in your own hearts, or to your wife, daughter, or son, "Let there be light." Do you create it out of nothing? No, you look for a match, or for some means by which you can start the light and cause it to be exhibited, where darkness was before. So when God creates light he calls forth and makes to shine that light which has existed from all eternity. We read that God is light. Was there ever a time that God did not exist? No, and if he is light there never was a time when light did not exist, one being as eternal as the other.

In order to prove that light did exist long before this world was called forth from the womb of the great waters, long before God said, "Let there be light," so far as this earth was concerned, I will refer you to some discoveries that have been made by philosophers and astronomers of the present day. They have invented telescopes that are of such penetrating power that they have discovered systems of worlds at such an immense distance in space, that they calculate their light would take six hundred thousand years to reach our system. Very well then, how long must it have been on the journey when the Lord said—"Let there be light," so far as this creation is concerned? I answer, that light was traveling five hundred and ninety-four thousand years before that time; consequently light must have existed, at least, half a million years before the Lord said—"Let there be light," so far as this globe was concerned.

In gathering together the materials that were scattered in space, the firmament that I was speaking of seems to have been one of the parts of creation, necessary in the grand process of collecting and condensing the constituents of our globe; and in doing this I do not know but what some portions of the atmospheric materials collected together helped to form some other worlds. At any rate the firmament was placed in such a manner as to divide the waters beneath it from those which were above it. According to the theory which is accepted by some as being true,

the planets of our system are supposed to have been originally formed by a rotation on its axis of a nebulous fluid, that was expanded far beyond the bounds of our present solar system; that by rotation and condensation nebulous masses were thrown off or detached from the great parent body, and that the orbits assumed by the parent mass and its detached masses, are the necessary results of their respective directions and velocities at the instant of detachment, combined with the laws of gravitation, and the relative positions of their respective centers of gravity. That in like manner, a still further operation of similar laws finally formed secondary planets or moons. This nebulous fluid, extending for millions of miles, might indeed be called a firmament, containing the constituents of water, both above and beneath as recorded in Genesis.

But what I wish to more fully explain, on this occasion, is the length of the days of creation—the days mentioned in which God performed certain portions of his work. It is said, that in six days he formed this world of ours, and that on the fourth day he formed the sun and the moon and the stars. What I understand by the formation of these celestial luminaries, is that he then caused them to shed forth their light. I can not suppose that it would take the Lord six days to form such a little speck of a world as ours, and then for him on the fourth day to form a globe fourteen hundred thousand times larger than the earth. This does not look consistent to me. If it took six days to form a small world like ours, we might certainly suppose that it would require more than one day to form the sun, which contains a quantity of matter sufficient to make some three hundred and fifty-four thousand worlds like this, and whose actual size or magnitude is fourteen hundred thousand times larger than our globe; consequently I understand by the formation of the sun and of the moon and stars, and setting them in the firmament of the heavens, that he merely suffered their light to shine on the fourth day, to regulate the evenings and mornings that were produced prior to that time, probably by some other cause. The Lord wanted, by these luminaries, to divide the day from the night, and he set them for times and for seasons in the firmament of the heavens.

These six days in which the Lord performed this work, I do not believe, were each limited to twenty-four hours, as are the periods which we now call day; indeed, when we come to new revelation, we find some light on this subject. In the Book of Abraham as well as in the inspired translation of the Scriptures, given through Joseph Smith, the Lord says, in speaking of the work of creating this earth, that he was governed by celestial time. According to this new revelation, there is a certain great world, called Kolob, placed near one of the celestial kingdoms, whose diurnal rotation takes place once in a thousand of our years; and that celestial time was measured by those celestial beings, by the rotations of Kolob, hence one day with the Lord was a thousand of our years. If this was the case, the six days of the creation of our earth, the six days during which it was being prepared as a habitation for man, must have been six thousand of our years. When the Lord spoke to Adam, after having placed him in the Garden of Eden, concerning the forbidden fruit, saying—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die!" we can not suppose, that the day there referred to meant a day of twenty-four hours. It could not have meant that, for history informs us that Adam lived almost one thousand years from the time of the Fall; but before the day of a thousand years had wholly passed away his death did take place.

The book of Abraham, translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith, also contains an account of the creation and the fall of man; but the word translated "day" in Genesis is translated in the Book of Abraham "time"—"in the time that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In the next sentence the same book says, speaking of time—"The reckoning of time was not yet given to man," that is, the Lord had reckoned previous to that period by the diurnal rotations of Kolob, and that, without doubt, was the day referred to in which our first parents should die, if they ate of the forbidden fruit.

We will now come to the seventh period of creation,—the seventh

thousand years; that, is called in Scriptures a day of rest, that is, supposing that what were called days in the beginning were a thousand years. The Lord rested from his labours the seventh day. What particular period of time within that day Adam fell I do not know; but one thing is certain, that in the morning of the seventh day the Garden of Eden was planted and he was placed therein, and during that morning a great many things transpired pertaining to this temporal creation. In the preceding six days was completed the formation or creation of the earth, after the spiritual order that man was formed or born in the heavens. All men, male and female, that ever have lived, or that ever will live on this earth, had a pre-existence before the formation of the earth commenced; and during our pre-existence in the heavens, the earth was undergoing this formation.

After man and woman were placed in the Garden of Eden, we find that they were tempted. By whom? By a being or beings who once dwelt in the presence of God, in his celestial kingdom. They once were angels of light and truth, having authority in the presence of the Father. But they rebelled against God; and one of those angels, named Lucifer, when they were talking over the great plan of redemption and salvation for the inhabitants of the future creation, proposed a plan by which he would redeem all mankind, that not one soul should be lost. But his plan was rejected, because it destroyed the agency of man, being contrary to God's plan; for he desires that all intelligent beings shall be free in the exercise of their agency. Because his plan was rejected, Lucifer rebelled, and a third part of the hosts of heaven joined him, and they were all cast down, and it was this being who entered into a beast, called a serpent, and tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, and that was the beginning of his power on this earth.

The events of this creation, the formation of the earth, the different day's work, &c., and finally the great day of rest after the six days were ended, were all typical, the latter especially, typifying what should take place in regard to the future existence of this creation. After six thousand years should pass away, during which Satan should have more or less dominion over the inhabitants of this world, he, in the seventh period, or the seventh thousand years, should be bound, should have no dominion over the earth or its inhabitants.

In order to show you this type still further; we will pass along over the flood, which was merely a type of the baptism of redemption, and we will come down to the day when this great period shall arrive, when Satan shall be bound and wickedness be swept from the face of the earth. This is to be done by a variety of judgments, the last of which is called fire. The Prophet Malachi says—"The day shall come that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud and they who do wickedly shall become as stubble, and the day that comes shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch, but unto them who fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and they shall go forth and grow up like calves of the stall, and they shall lead down the wicked, and they shall be ashes under the soles of their feet in the day that I do this, saith the Lord of hosts."

Here then is a declaration how this earth is to be cleansed; the second time from wickedness, namely, by fire, which is a more powerful element than water. The earth is to be cleansed by fire; in other words, the elements are to be melted with fervent heat. This is the declaration of several of the prophets. David, in speaking of this period, in one of his psalms, says, the mountains shall melt like wax before the presence of the Lord when he shall come. You know how wax melts when exposed to the influence of heat. So, when the Lord comes, will the elements melt and the mountains flow down. This presence with fervent heat. This will cleanse the earth as it was cleansed in the days of Noah, only by another element called fire. This is typical of the cleansing of those who embrace the plan of salvation. After you have been immersed, as this earth was, in the water, and been cleansed and received the remission of your sins, you also have the promise of baptism of fire and