

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER ORSON PRATT,

DELIVERED

In the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Morning, April 11th, 1875.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

If the congregation will give their attention I will read a few passages from the last chapter of Isaiah, commencing in the middle of the 18th verse. [The speaker read from the 18th verse, commencing—"It shall come" &c., unto the end of the 20th verse.]

There are some very great and important events predicted in these few lines which I have read, concerning the gathering of all nations and tongues, but more especially the gathering of the house of Israel, a sign being promised—that when that period shall arrive, in the purposes of God, a sign shall be given to the children of men, that they may know when these great events are to take place. In this passage we are not told what the sign shall be, we merely have it promised; but we would naturally draw the conclusion that it will be something of a peculiar character, something that can be distinguished by the nations, kindred and tongues of the earth preparatory to the great gathering that is promised in the Scriptures of truth, "I will set a sign among them." And after setting this sign he will send missionaries to Tubal, to Javan, to the isles that are afar off, to Tarshish, Pul and Lud and to them that draw the bow." And it is said concerning the missionaries who are thus sent forth, that "they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles." Then, when the sign is set, the missionaries are sent forth and the glory of God begins to be declared among the Gentiles, the Lord will bring about the gathering of his people Israel, bringing them upon horses, in chariots, in litters, upon swift beasts and upon mules to his holy mountain in Jerusalem; and he will gather all nations and tongues when that dispensation shall come.

The Lord has set that sign; the Lord has sent forth the messengers here spoken of to the various nations, as predicted, and already the voice of these messengers is heard in the uttermost parts of the earth, declaring the word of the Lord among the Gentiles, preparing them for the great event predicted by the mouth of Isaiah the Prophet.

Do this people desire to know what the sign predicted by the mouth of Isaiah means? Do you wish to know the nature of that sign? Let me refer you to the words of the everlasting God that have been uttered from the heavens, declared in this record brought forth in the last days, the Book of Mormon. Let us refer to a prediction uttered by the mouth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he appeared personally upon this great western continent, and taught the ancient nations of America. He has told us by his own mouth what the sign should be for the gathering of all the dispersed of his people, the house of Israel. I will read the words of our Saviour to the ancient inhabitants of this western continent. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, all these things"—the things which he had been speaking about to the multitude—"shall surely come, as the voice of the Father hath commanded me. Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled; and then shall Jerusalem begin to be inhabited with my people, and it shall be the land of their inheritance. And verily I say unto you, I will give unto you a sign that you may know the time when these things shall be about to take place, that I shall gather in from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion. And behold this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign, for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter, of myself and by the power of the Holy Ghost, which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles—that is, when this book called the Book of Mormon should be made known unto the Gentiles—that they may know concerning this, my people, who are a remnant of the house of Ja-

cob, and concerning this, my people, who shall be scattered by them in the latter days. Verily I say unto you when these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father from them unto you."

Now, such is the sign. First, this work will be made known to the Gentiles and will come forth from the Gentiles unto the Indians. "For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he has covenanted with his people, O house of Israel. Therefore when these works, and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter—that is, the works which were performed during the first three or four centuries of the Christian era on this American continent, recorded in their records called the Book of Mormon—"when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth from the Gentiles unto your seed, which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity."

Now this dwindling in unbelief of the American Indians is very evident even to the antiquarians of our country, all of whom will admit that once a civilized nation dwelt on this continent. No learned man living disputes this. Why do they suppose any such thing? The ruins of their ancient cities, palaces and temples, proclaim in the ears of all living that once there dwelt on this hemisphere a great and powerful people, who were civilized and understood the art of constructing beautiful and substantial buildings. But now, O how degraded, fallen and sunk into the very depths of darkness are the descendants of that once great, powerful and exalted people! "They shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity," because they rejected the gospel. In the fourth century of the Christian era they apostatized from the religion of their fathers; they were cursed by the Almighty, a skin of darkness came upon them; they were cursed in all that they set their hands to do, and the withering curse of the Almighty has been upon them from generation to generation, until the present day. They were to dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity. "For thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power to the Gentiles, for this cause, that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and know of the truth of my doctrine that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel."

Such is the object of bringing this work forth to the Gentiles first. That is why God prepared the way for a great and powerful nation, free from all other nations under heaven, to be established here on this continent. The great purpose which God had in view was to set up a Kingdom in the latter days in which there should be full and complete religious liberty and freedom of conscience, that the Kingdom might go forth unto the ends of the earth; "and when these things shall come to pass, that thy seed"—the American Indians—"shall begin to know these things. It shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced, unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people, who are of the house of Israel."

Now then, here is a prediction in Isaiah, that before the Lord gathers Israel he would set up a sign, showing not only to us but to all people, nations and tongues in the four quarters of the earth that he is about to gather together all the people of the house of Israel. That sign is when these American Indians shall begin to know the gospel taught and practised by their ancient fathers. "When that day shall come it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths, for that which had not been told them shall they see, that which they had not heard shall they consider; for in that day, for my sake, shall the Father work a work which shall be a great and marvellous work among them; and there shall be among them which will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them. But behold,

the life of my servant is in mine hand," &c.

We will now pass on to the next page. "And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached unto the remnant of this people"—unto the Indians—"verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem, yea the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me; that they may call upon the Father in my name, and then shall the work commence with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance. And they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them saith the Father, and I will be their rearward."

Forty-five years have passed away since God brought forth this sign, the Book of Mormon, and sent missionaries to the nations—to Tarshish, Pul, Lud, Tubal, Javan and to the islands afar off, that have not heard his fame neither have seen his glory, and these missionaries have declared his glory among the Gentiles. Forty-five years of proclamation to the nations of the Gentiles! Forty-five years of warning to all nations and tongues! Now, after so long a period has elapsed since God brought forth this wonderful sign, he has begun to work among the remnants of the house of Israel, the American Indians, upon this continent, by his own power. What is it that has stirred them up to believe in this work? Has it been your exertion? Not altogether; yet, no doubt, you, in some small degree, as far as your faith would permit, have helped on the work among these wild tribes. You have sought to recover them, you have fed and clothed them to some extent; you have told them occasionally about the records of their fathers; you have tried to bring them to repentance; but, after years of labor, you have said—"Alas! alas for them! What can be done to reclaim a people so far fallen into the depths of ignorance and corruption?" Your hearts have been almost discouraged so far as your own labors were concerned. But how soon and how marvelously, when the time had come, has the Lord our God begun to operate upon them as nations and as tribes, bringing them in from hundreds of miles distant to inquire after the elders of this church. What for? What do they want with the elders? They want to be baptized! Who told them to come and be baptized? They say that men came to them in their dreams, and spoke to them in their own language, and told them that away yonder was a people who had authority from God to baptize them; but that they must repent of their sins, cease their evil habits and lay aside the traditions of their fathers, for they were false; that they must cease to roam over the face of the land, robbing and plundering, and learn to live as the white people.

Who are these men who have been to the Indians and told them to repent of their sins, and be baptized by the "Mormons"? They are men who obtained the promise of the Lord, upwards of eighteen centuries ago, that they should be instruments in his hands of bringing about the redemption of their descendants. The Lord God promised them the privilege of working for and in behalf of their descendants in the latter days; and they have begun the work. All this was foretold in this record, the Book of Mormon.

Now I will read a little for the benefit of the Latter day Saints, for though they have this record lying upon their shelves, I fear there are some who are careless about reading its contents, and perhaps do not understand the signs of the times, and the fulfillment of the purposes of God, which are here so clearly set forth. Jesus appeared on this American Continent soon after his resurrection, three different times that are recorded, and how many other times that are not recorded, I do not know. But he showed himself to them and brake bread with them. But the third time he came to the Twelve whom he had chosen on this land, as he was about to leave them he put a very important question to them. He said unto his twelve disciples, speaking unto them one by one—"What is it that you desire of me, after that I am gone unto the Father?" And they all spake save it were three—"We desire that, after we have lived unto the age of men, that our ministry wherein thou hast called us

may have an end, and that we may speedily come unto thee in thy kingdom." And he said unto them—"Blessed are ye because ye have desired this thing of me; therefore after that ye are seventy-two years old, ye shall come unto me in my kingdom, and with me ye shall find rest." And when he had spoken these words unto the nine, he then turns to the three and said unto them—"What will ye that I shall do unto you when I am gone to the Father?" And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they dare not speak unto him the thing which they desired. And he said unto them—"Behold I know your thoughts, and you have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry before I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me, therefore more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death." These three men had the promise that they should never taste death; "but," said the Saviour unto them—"ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven. Ye shall never endure the pains of death, but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father. And again ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow, save it be for the sins of the world; and all this will I do because of the thing which ye have desired of me, for ye have desired that ye may bring the souls of men unto me while the world shall stand; and for this cause, ye shall have fullness of joy, and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fullness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father, and the Father and I are one; and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men because of me."

What a glorious promise was made to these three men! Did they receive any change? Yes, they did; not to immortality however, but a change sufficient was wrought in their bodies that death should have no power over them. But let us read a little further, it is very interesting. "And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three who were to tarry;" that is, he touched the nine who were to preach until they were seventy-two years old and who were then to be taken home to God, "and then he departed, and behold the heavens were opened and they (the three) were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things. And it was forbidden them that they should utter; neither was it given unto them power that they could utter the things which they saw and heard; and whether they were in the body or out of the body they could not tell, for it did seem unto them like a transfiguration of things." That is the way that they received their partial change. "But it came to pass that they did again minister upon the face of the earth; nevertheless they did not minister of the things which they had heard and seen, because of the commandment which was given them in heaven."

Now these men lived in the first century of the Christian era on this continent, and when that generation all passed away they also lived in the second century of the Christian era, and ministered to the ancient inhabitants on this land. And when the second century had all passed off the stage of action they also lived in the third century; and in the fourth century the Lord took these three men from the midst of the remnant of Israel on this land. Where did he take them? I do not know, it is not revealed. Why did he take them away? Because of the apostasy of the people, because the people were unworthy of the ministration of such great and holy men; because they sought to kill them; because they cast them into dens of wild beasts twice; and these men of God played with these wild beasts as a child would play with a sucking lamb, and received no harm from them. They cast them three times into a furnace of fire, and they came forth therefrom and received no hurt. They dug deep pits in the earth and cast them therein, supposing that they would perish; but by the power of the word of God that was in them, they smote the earth in the name of the Lord, and were delivered from these pits. And thus they went forth performing signs, wonders and miracles among this remnant of Israel, until their wickedness became so great that the Lord commanded them to depart out of their midst. And the remnant of Israel, from that day to the present—between fourteen and fifteen centuries—have been dwindling in unbelief, in ignorance, and in all the darkness which now surrounds them; but notwithstanding their darkness and misery, the three Nephites, for many generations, have not administered to them, because of the commandment of the Almighty to them.

But are they always to remain silent? Are there no more manifestations to come from these three men? Are they never again to remember the remnants of the House of Israel on this land? Let us read the promise. "Behold I was about to write the names of those who were never to taste of death, but the Lord forbade; therefore I write them not, for they are hid from the world; but behold I have seen them." Mormon saw them nearly four centuries after they were caught up into heaven, and after they received their partial change. Mormon saw them and they administered unto him. He says—"Behold I have seen them and they have ministered unto me; and behold they will be among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles knoweth them not." They will, no doubt call them poor deluded Mormons, and say that they ought to be hooted out of society, and that they ought to be persecuted,

afflicted, and hated by all people. "They will be among the Gentiles and the Gentiles knoweth them not. They will also be among the Jews, and the Jews shall know them not. And it shall come to pass when the Lord seeth fit, in his wisdom, that they shall minister unto all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, and shall bring out of them unto Jesus many souls, that their desire may be fulfilled; and also because of the convincing power of God which is in them; and they are as the angels of God. And if they shall pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus, they can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good; therefore great and marvellous works shall be wrought by them before the great and coming day when all people must surely stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Yea even among the Gentiles shall there be a great and marvellous work wrought by them, before that judgment day."

Now, having read these things, let us come back again to this spiritual movement that we hear of among the remnants of Jacob, in these western deserts, in the northwest hundreds of miles, in the west and in the south-west. It is not confined to hundreds, but thousands testify that men have appeared individually in dreams, speaking their own language and, as Brother Hyde said last Tuesday, these men tell their descendants what their duties are, what they should do, and how they should hunt up this people, repent of their sins, be baptized, &c. And the parties who have been thus instructed time and time again, have fulfilled the commandments that they received, and some of them have come hundreds of miles to be baptized, and they are now desirous of laying aside their savage disposition, their roaming habits, and they want to learn to cultivate the earth, to lay down their weapons of war, cease stealing and to become a peaceable good people.

The work thus commenced will not stop here. The Book of Mormon says—"When thy seed shall begin to know these things, it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of his covenant which he hath made with his people who are of the house of Israel." This remnant, the American Indians, do not comprise all Israel, they are but a small remnant of one single tribe, namely the descendants of that Joseph who was carried into Egypt. Away in yonder north countries, where I do not know, but away in those regions are ten tribes of the house of Israel. How do you know they are in the north country? Because this Bible has told us that in the latter days they should come out of the north country, and if they were not in the north country they could not come from there. Jeremiah says in his thirty-first chapter—"Behold I will bring them from the north, the blind and the lame with them, and the woman with child; they shall come, a great company out of the north countries." Where will they go to? Will they go immediately to Palestine, where they formerly had their inheritance? No. Jeremiah tells us where they will go; he tells us there is to be a place called Zion before these tribes come out of the north countries, and when they come with a great company, the blind and the lame with them, and the Lord God leads them with supplication and with tears and with prayers, bringing them forth from those dreary, desolate, cold arctic regions; when that day shall come there shall be a Zion prepared to receive these ten tribes, before they finally go back to Palestine. Is there anything in the Scriptures about this? Yes. In the same chapter of Jeremiah we read that "they shall come and sing in the height of Zion." Zion, then, will have to be built up before they come; Zion will have to be reared somewhere and prepared to receive them; and it will be a holy place, and it will be a holy people who will build up Zion, so much so that the Lord will bring these ten tribes in to the height of Zion, into the midst of it.

What will then take place? They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for the wheat, the wine, the oil, for the young of the flock; their souls shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Why? Because they have got among a good people, where there is no need to sorrow; they have come up into a land that is choice above all other lands, a land that brings forth wheat, and grapes for the producing of wine, where flocks, herds, &c., are multiplied, and their souls will be like a watered garden, and all the sorrows they have experienced for twenty-five hundred years, in the cold regions of the north, will be done away; and they will not sorrow any more at all.

This same thing is predicted in the sixteenth chapter, as well as in the thirty-first of Jeremiah. The Lord says in the sixteenth chapter—"Behold the days shall come when it shall no more be said the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;" but instead of that saying, there will be another more glorious saying, namely, that "the Lord liveth who brought up the children of Israel from the north country, and from all other countries whither he has driven them." But will that do away the former saying—"The Lord liveth who brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?" Yes. Some may suppose that as the Jews retain that saying to this day it never would be done away. The Jews, wherever they may be scattered, whether in Christian lands, or among the heathens where they are anxious to convert them to idolatry, say—"We worship that God who brought up our fathers out of the land of Egypt, and wrought signs, wonders and mighty deeds, in bringing them forth, leading them through the waters of the mighty deep into the Promised Land, Palestine." But notwithstanding they have retained this saying it will be one day done away, superseded by the manifestations of God's power in bringing Israel from the north country and all other