

## DISCOURSE.

By Elder ORSON PRATT, Delivered  
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REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

I WILL read a few sayings of our Savior, recorded in the second and third verses of the 14th chapter of the gospel according to St. John:

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

It is not very customary for the Latter-day Saints to select a text and to confine their remarks to the subject matter thereof; yet I do not know that there is any particular harm in doing so, provided we do not limit the operations of the Spirit of God upon ourselves. It is my most earnest desire when addressing a public assembly, to understand the mind and will of God in relation to what should be said to them. No man, by his own wisdom, understands the wants of his fellow creatures in all respects, but the Spirit of the Most High understands the circumstances of all the people, and that Spirit, having all power and wisdom, is capable of moving upon the hearts of His servants to speak in the very moment what is most adapted to the condition of the people.

I listened with great interest this forenoon to the many subjects which were briefly touched upon by Elders Woodruff and Smith, one of which, in a particular manner, seemed to rest with considerable bearing upon my mind: that was the condition of mankind in a future state, and the principalities, powers, glories, dominions and exaltations that will be enjoyed by the true Saints. This is a subject of special interest to the Latter-day Saints, and we should look forward with feelings of great joy in anticipation of the future, and we should understand what is necessary for us to do in this short life, to secure the great blessings promised to the faithful hereafter. Jesus, in the passage I have read, has informed the world that there are many mansions in His Father's house. This, however, was not spoken especially to the world, but to the apostles and disciples who were gathered around him. The Father's house! There is a great deal comprehended in these words. Where is it, and what kind of a house may we conclude it to be? Are we to understand by the term house, used in this passage, small buildings such as are erected for our residence, here on earth, and if not, what are we to understand? I understand that God is a Being who, as the Scriptures declare, inhabits eternity. Eternity is His dwelling place, and in this eternity are vast numbers of worlds—creations formed by His mighty hands; consequently when we speak of the Father's house we are to understand it in the scriptural sense, in the idea that is conveyed by many of the inspired writers. It is declared in many places that eternity is His habitation. He is not the God of one little world like ours; He is not a Being who presides over a few isolated worlds in one part of eternity, and all the rest left to go at random; He is not confined to the worlds that are made, comparatively speaking, to-day; but all worlds, past, present and future, from eternity to eternity, may be considered His dominions, and His places of residence, and He is omnipresent. Not personally: this would be impossible, for a person can only be in one place at the same instant, whether he be an immortal or a mortal personage; whether he be high, exalted and filled with all power, wisdom, glory and greatness, or poor, ignorant and humble. So far as the materials are concerned, a personage can only occupy one place at the same moment. That is a self-evident truth, one that can not be controverted. When we speak, therefore, of God being omnipresent we do not mean that His person is omnipresent, we mean that His wisdom, power, glory, greatness, goodness and all the characteristics of His eternal attributes are manifested and spread abroad throughout all the creations that He has made. He is there by His influence—by His power and wisdom, by His outstretched arm; He, by His authority, occupies the immensity of space. But when we come to His glorious personage, that has a dwelling place—a particular location; but where this location is, is not revealed. Suffice it to say that God is not confined in His personal character to one location. He goes and comes; He visits the various departments of His dominions, gives them counsel and instructions, and presides over them according to His own will and pleasure.

But if eternity is his house, habitation or residence, what are the mansions referred to by our Savior, mentioned in the text? I understand them to be places that the Creator has constructed like this present world of ours; for this world, in its future history and progress, will no doubt become one of the mansions of the Father, wherein His glory will be made manifest as it is in many other redeemed worlds. I consider that this idea of mansions has reference more especially to celestial mansions, or worlds that have been redeemed and made

celestial. God has formed more worlds than can possibly be enumerated or numbered by man. If it were possible for man to count the particles of this little earth of ours; if he were able to enumerate the figures that would express these particles, it would scarcely be a beginning to the number of the mansions which God has made in the eternal ages that have passed—mansions that were made, first temporal and afterwards redeemed and made eternal. Mansions, no doubt, constructed somewhat similar to the one we now inhabit; and in the eternal progression of worlds they rise upwards and still upwards until they are glorified and are crowned with the presence of Him who made them, and become eternal in their duration, the same as our earth will eventually become. We know, according to the declaration of the scriptures, that our earth was made some few thousand years ago. How long the process of formation lasted we do not know. It is called in the scriptures six days; but we do not know the meaning of the scriptural term day. It evidently does not mean such days as we are now acquainted with,—days governed by the rotation of the earth on its axis, and by the shining of the great central luminary of our solar system. A day of twenty-four hours is not the kind of day referred to in the scriptural account of the creation; the word days, in the scriptures, seems oftentimes to refer to some indefinite period of time. The Lord, in speaking to Adam in the garden, says, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" yet he did not die within twenty-four hours after he had eaten the forbidden fruit, but he lived to be almost a thousand years old, from which we learn that the word day, in this passage, had no reference to days of the same duration as ours. Again it is written, in the second chapter of Genesis, "In the day that He created the heavens and the earth;" not six days, but, "in the day" that he did it, incorporating all the six days into one, and calling that period "the day" that He created the heavens and the earth.

When this world was formed, no doubt, it was a very beautiful creation, for God is not the author of anything imperfect. If we have imperfections in our world God has had nothing to do with their introduction or origin, man has brought them upon himself and upon the earth he inhabits. But however long or short may have been the period of the construction of this earth we find that some six thousand years ago it seems to have been formed, something after the fashion and in the manner in which it now exists, with the exception of the imperfections, evils and curses that exist on the face of it. Six thousand years, according to the best idea that we have of chronology, are now about completed; we are living almost on the eve of the last of the six millenniums—a thousand years are called a millennium—and to-morrow, we may say, will be the seventh; that is the seventh period, the seventh age or seventh time; or we can call it a day—the seventh day, the great day of rest wherein our globe will rest from all wickedness, when there will be no sin or transgression upon the whole face of it, the curses that have been brought upon it being removed, and all things being restored as they were before the Fall. The earth will then become beautified, not fully glorified, not fully redeemed, but it will be sanctified, and purified and prepared for the reign of our Savior, whose death and sufferings we have, this afternoon, commemorated. He will come and personally reign upon it, as one of the mansions of His Father; and after the thousand years have passed away, and wickedness is permitted again, for a short season, to corrupt the face of the earth, then will come the final change which our earth, or this mansion of our Father, will undergo. A change which will be wrought, not by a flood of waters, or baptism, as in the days of Noah, cleansing it then from all its sins; but by a baptism of fire, and of the Holy Ghost, which will sanctify and purify the very elements themselves. After the seventh millennium has passed away the elements will be cleansed, or in other words they will be resolved into their original condition—as they were before they were brought together in the formation of this globe. Hence John says, in the 20th chapter of Revelations: "I saw a great white throne and Him that sat thereon, from before whose face the heavens and the earth fled away, and there was no place found for them."

Now, this fleeing away of the literal heavens, and of the earth on which we dwell with all it contains, will be similar to the destruction or death of our natural bodies. We might say, with great propriety, when a man is martyred or burned at the stake, his body has fled away, its present organization is dissolved, and its elements are resolved into their original condition, and perhaps united with and dispersed among many other elements of our globe; but in the resurrection these elements are brought together again and the body reorganized, not into a temporal or mortal tabernacle, but into an eternal house or abiding place for the spirit of man. So the earth will pass away and its elements be dispersed in space; but, by the power of that Almighty Creator who organized it in the beginning, it will be renewed, and those elements which now enter into the composition of our globe, will again enter into the composition of the new heavens and the new earth, for, says the Prophet John, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had fled away."

He then beheld two cities, as is recorded in the twenty-first chapter of Revelations, descending from God out of heaven. The first one is called the New Jerusalem. The description of this city is not given in this chapter; we have no information regarding its size or the number of its gates and the height of its walls; all that we know is that John saw it descend out of heaven. Afterwards he was taken off into a high mountain and saw a second city descend out of heaven. A description of this, called the "Holy City," is given. The number of the gates, the height of the walls, the nature of the houses, the streets and the glory of this city are plainly given in the revelation. But when the first city, called the New Jerusalem, descended, he heard a voice say, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, henceforth there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, for the former things have passed away and all things are made new." This will be the final transformation of this earth, and when that is effected it will become one of the mansions of our Father. It will be redeemed, or, we might say, resurrected after it passes away. That renewed state will be eternal, it will never be changed; and it will be the eternal residence of those disciples to whom Jesus was addressing the words of the text.

Where will Jesus be? What is the particular creation assigned to him? I answer that our globe will become the abiding place of all the Saints from the days of Father Adam until the time that it passes away and is renewed again and becomes glorified, after which the tabernacle of God will be with men, and He will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and this creation from that time henceforth and forever will be free from sorrow; and from that period to all the ages of eternity there will be no more death, for death will be swallowed up in victory. The curse that came by the Fall will be entirely removed and God, Himself, will light up the world with His glory, making of it a body more brilliant than the sun that shines in yonder heavens.

Some may inquire, "Do you think the sun is a glorified world?" Yes, in one sense. It is not yet fully glorified, redeemed, clothed with celestial power and crowned with the presence of the Father in all the fullness and beauty of a celestial mansion, because it is still subject to change more or less. If it were fully glorified; if it had passed through its temporal existence and had been redeemed, glorified and made celestial, and had become the eternal abiding place of celestial and glorified beings, it would be far more glorious than our eyes could behold, the eyes of mortality could not endure the light thereof. We can endure and rejoice in its present light and glory. It gives light and heat to the surrounding worlds and thus renders them fit habitations for intelligent human beings. But were it glorified, as it will be hereafter and as our earth will be, men such as we are, clothed with mortality, would be overpowered, we could not stand in the presence of its glory without being consumed. This earth, therefore, is destined to become one of the heavenly mansions.

And now, with regard to its being the place of the habitation of the Saints for ever and ever, let me quote some proofs in relation to it from the scriptures. Jesus, in his great and beautiful sermon on the mount, has told us of the blessings that should rest on his people, among which he says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." This certainly could not have had reference to this temporal existence, for look at the meek who lived on the earth in the first ages of Christianity. Did they inherit the earth? No. What was their destiny? To wander about in sheep skins and goat skins, dwelling in the dens and caves of the earth, not being counted worthy by the wicked to receive an inheritance with them, yet Jesus said, "They shall inherit the earth." When? If they do not inherit it before death they must after the resurrection. In proof that they will inherit it after the resurrection, let me refer you to the testimony of John, recorded in the fifth chapter of Revelations. John saw a great company of Saints in the presence of God the Father, and except those who were resurrected at the time of the resurrection of Christ they were the spirits of men. They were singing a beautiful song the purport of which was emigration. They had it in view to emigrate from their present home or location in the celestial paradise, to some other place, and their song reads something like this: "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and by thy blood hast redeemed us from all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." This is the place of their future residence, and they rejoiced much in the anticipation of returning to their mother earth, the place of their nativity; they rejoiced exceedingly at the prospect of getting back again to the old homestead. They were absent a little season because of the wickedness that covered the earth, they were absent a little season because death overpowered their mortal tabernacles. The Fall had brought them down to the grave, but they rejoiced that the grave would no longer hold its captives. These spirits from all nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples were rejoicing in the great day when they should receive their resurrected bodies and return

again to their old homestead,—the earth, to receive their kingdoms, thrones and dominions. We shall reign on the earth!" Not come to be persecuted and driven about as the meek always have been when the wicked have had power; not come to be scattered, peeled, and driven as the ancient Saints were; not to be sawn asunder, beheaded, persecuted and buffeted as the servants and Saints of God have always been; but they will come here to reign: "Thou hast made us kings and priests unto God; and we shall reign on the earth." The period during which they were to reign, as mentioned in the 20th chapter of Revelation, was one thousand years, and this was the introduction to their eternal reign. "Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection," for on such the second death can have no power, and all such shall be priests to God and to Christ and they shall reign with Him a thousand years. In their song they did not stretch forth to that eternal reign on the earth which will commence after the thousand years have ended and the earth has passed away and been renewed. That was too glorious a theme to be recorded by John and for the inhabitants of the earth in their corrupt and fallen state to become acquainted with. If they rejoiced with such exceeding great joy in the prospect of returning to reign only for a thousand years, before the earth was fully redeemed, glorified, and made new, how much greater would be their joy and how much more glorious would be the song if they could see themselves made kings and priests to God, and knew they were about to commence a reign on the earth which would endure throughout the countless ages of eternity.

To prove that mankind, when they come out of their graves, will come into possession of the earth, let me quote a very familiar passage from the 37th chapter of Ezekiel. Ezekiel lived in the midst of a people who had apostatized in a great measure from the religion of their fathers, and who began to think that their hope was lost and that they were cut off from inheriting the promises made to their fathers, because they saw that their fathers for many generations were dead and gone and neither they nor their seed had come into possession of the Promised Land, according to the predictions made in the days of Abraham and Jacob. You recollect that the Lord promised Abraham and Jacob that they should have the land of Palestine for an everlasting possession. Not only their seed, but they themselves,—Abraham and Jacob, were to inherit it everlastingly. Well might the Jews, when considering these promises, and looking upon the bones of Jacob and their old forefathers, who were righteous men, bleaching, as it were, in their sepulchers, be ready to find fault and say: "Our bones are dried, our hope is lost, the promise is not fulfilled, and we are cut off from our portion,—that is the Promised Land given to us for an everlasting inheritance." The Lord, to do away with such wicked and erroneous notions which were prevalent among the apostates of Israel, carried Ezekiel into the midst of a valley full of bones, and then told him to prophesy unto those bones and to say unto them: "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord unto these bones: Behold I will bring up flesh and sinews upon you and will cover you with skin," etc. And Ezekiel prophesied as he was commanded and as he prophesied there was a great noise and a shaking and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And while he was examining these numerous skeletons without either flesh, sinews or skin, "Lo, the sinews and flesh came upon them and the skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them." Then the Lord said unto the Prophet: "Prophesy unto the wind, son of man, and say to the wind, thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."

Now, if we were to go to uninspired men and ask them the meaning of this, they would say it was the conversion of sinners to newness of life; but the Lord had another interpretation, which you will find in the following verse: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel," including the old patriarchs, including their forefathers for many generations. The people in Ezekiel's day said, "Our bones and the bones of our fathers are dry and our hope is lost, for we are not brought into the inheritance of the land of Palestine etc., but the Lord by this parable of the valley of dry bones wished to do away with this lack of faith among Israel, and his interpretation of it was: "Behold, I will open your graves and I will bring you up out of your graves, and will bring you into the land of Israel." Notice now, the Lord did not say He would take them off to some unknown region in the immensity of space, according to the notions of some of our modern poets, who look forward to a heavenly place beyond the bounds of time and space. When a boy I used frequently to attend the Methodist meetings, though I never joined any religious society; but I recollect a very beautiful hymn they used to sing about being waited away to a heaven of some kind. I will repeat two or three lines of this hymn:

"Beyond the bounds of time and space