

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER ORSON PRATT,

DELIVERED

In the Fourteenth Ward Assembly Rooms, Sunday Afternoon, Jan. 25th, 1874.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

I will read a portion of a prophecy, written in the Book of Mormon, in the second chapter of the second book of Nephi. The prophet who spoke the words I am about to read, and who also quoted the words of another prophet, was named Lehi; he lived about six hundred years before Christ.

"For behold, thou art the fruit of my loins; and I am a descendant of Joseph, who was carried captive into Egypt. And great were the covenants of the Lord, which he made unto Joseph; wherefore, Joseph truly saw our day. And he obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off; nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord, that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the Spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light; yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom.

For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins. Yea, Joseph truly said, thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment, that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers. And I will give unto him a commandment, that he shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work. And he shall be great like unto Moses, whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel. And Moses will I raise up, to deliver thy people out of the land of Egypt. But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins; and not to the bringing forth my word only, saith the Lord, but to the convincing them of my word, which shall have already gone forth among them. Wherefore, the fruit of thy loins shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. And out of weakness he shall be made strong, in that day when my work shall commence among all my people, unto the restoring thee, O house of Israel, saith the Lord.

And thus prophesied Joseph, saying: Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him, shall be confounded; for this promise, which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise. And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation; yea, thus prophesied Joseph, I am sure of this thing, even as I am sure of the promise of Moses, for the Lord hath said unto me, I will preserve thy seed for ever. And the Lord hath said, I will raise up a Moses; and I will give power unto him in a rod; and I will give judgement unto him in writing. Yet I will not loose his tongue, that he shall speak much; for I will not make him mighty in speaking. But I will write unto him my law, by the finger of mine own hand; and I will make a spokesman for him. And the Lord said unto me

also, I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins; and I will make for him a spokesman. And I, behold, I will give unto him, that he shall write the writing of the fruit of thy loins, unto the fruit of thy loins; and the spokesman of thy loins shall declare it. And the words which he shall write, shall be the words which are expedient in my wisdom should go forth unto the fruit of thy loins. And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust; for I know their faith. And they shall cry from the dust; yea, even repentance unto their brethren, even after many generations have gone by them. And it shall come to pass that their cry shall go, even according to the simplicity of their words. Because of their faith, their words shall proceed forth out of my mouth unto their brethren who are the fruit of thy loins; and the weakness of their words will I make strong in their faith, unto the remembering of my covenant which I made unto thy fathers."

Corresponding with this prophecy, I will read a few verses in the 37th chapter of Ezekiel, commencing at the 15th verse.

"The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,

"Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

"And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thy hand.

"And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these?

"Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

"And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

"And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

"And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."

I have read these two prophecies; one, recorded in the Book of Mormon, delivered by Joseph in Egypt, written upon brass plates and brought by the descendants of Joseph from the city of Jerusalem, about six hundred years before Christ, with their colony that came from Palestine and were located on the western coast of South America, having crossed the mighty waters under the direction of the Almighty; the other, and corresponding prophecy, was written by Ezekiel the prophet, a short time after this colony left the city of Jerusalem. Ezekiel informs us in this chapter, that prior to the great restitution of the House of Israel, never to be scattered or divided into two nations again, the Lord would bring forth the stick of Joseph, written upon for the tribe of Judah, and the other, written upon for Judah, and cause them to grow together in His hand, and when this great event should take place, it should be the period when he would take Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and gather them on every side, and bring them into their own lands, and when he had accomplished this work, he would make them one nation upon the mountains of Israel, and they should no more become two nations, neither should they, from that time forward, be two kingdoms any more at all.

It is very evident to every person who believes in the Scriptures of truth that, so far as the gathering of Israel and their becoming one nation in their own land are concerned, this prophecy has never yet been fulfilled, it is therefore among those great events which the Lord has decreed and determined to bring to pass in a period of time yet in the future; and he has pointed out, in this chapter of Ezekiel, the manner and method in which he will commence the great work of the restitution of Israel. A great deal has been done by the religious

world, so far as dollars and cents, and the formation of societies are concerned, for the amelioration of the condition of the scattered Jews. But what are the results of all the labors of the various Christian sects in this direction? Have they succeeded in gathering the Jews from the nations of the earth? Not at all. A very few Jews at the present time are residents of Palestine, and they are not converted to the truth. They believe in the religion of their ancient fathers, and all of them who dwell there are very poor, many of them are what may be termed beggars, being sustained principally by the charity of travellers and other visitors to that land, and by donations from charitable Christians and Jews abroad. But all the Jews dwelling in Palestine are but a very small handful, compared with the immense numbers of their brethren who are scattered to the four winds of heaven. Then, besides the Jews thus scattered, there are the ten tribes, who are not called Jews, who were led away out of the land of Palestine about seven hundred and twenty years before Christ, and who have never dwelt in that land since. They were taken captive by the king of Assyria and taken to his dominions, and never since the day of their captivity, now almost twenty-six centuries, have they or their descendants had a residence in the Promised Land.

Prior to their captivity the House of Israel were divided into two kingdoms; one, called the Ten Tribes, who had their capital city in Samaria, north of Jerusalem. Numerous kings reigned over them, from the days of Rehoboam, son of Solomon, until the time of their captivity. They were a separate and distinct nation from the Jewish nation, which consisted of the tribes of Judah and Levi, a very few of the remnants of Joseph, and a portion of the tribe of Benjamin, who were not taken away with the ten tribes. About a hundred and thirty years after the ten tribes were taken from Palestine, the Jewish nation were taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, and they dwelt in Babylon seventy years, after which they returned to Palestine, rebuilt their capital city and its walls, and re-established their temple, and continued to dwell in the land of their fathers until the coming of Christ, and for about seventy years after his coming; and then, in fulfillment of a certain prophecy, the Jewish nation were scattered by the Roman army under Titus. About eleven hundred thousand Jews perished by the sword, and, according to history, about ninety-seven thousand were dispersed among the nations.

This great calamity happened to the Jewish nation in fulfillment of many prophecies, among which I will quote one by our Savior, recorded in the 21st chapter of Luke. Says our Savior—"For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and they shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." That portion of this prophecy, concerning the Jews perishing by the edge of the sword, and their being scattered among all nations, and Jerusalem being trodden down under the feet of the Gentiles, has had a literal fulfillment; but there is one saying of our Savior that has not yet been fulfilled—"Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." That the times of the Gentiles are not yet fulfilled is proved by the fact that Jerusalem is still in possession of the Gentiles, and under their control. When the time shall have arrived for the fulfillment of the prophecy recorded by Ezekiel the prophet, when the Jews and the ten tribes shall return and they shall no more be divided into two kingdoms, Jerusalem will be redeemed from the hands of the Gentiles, and it will be again inhabited by the Jews as a nation; not by a poor miserable remnant, dependent upon the charity of foreign nations for subsistence, but hundreds of thousands of the twelve tribes will return to Palestine, and their capital city will be Jerusalem, not Samaria.

This fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles is something to which I wish to call the special attention of my hearers this afternoon. In what manner will the Lord fulfill this work among the Gentiles, that the fulness of their times may come in? We have a little information on this subject, recorded in the

eleventh chapter of Romans, which makes the subject very plain in regard to the two great classes of people—the Jews and the Gentiles. They are spoken of in that chapter under the figure of two olive trees, one—the house of Israel—being represented by a tame olive tree, and the other—the Gentiles—by a wild olive tree. Paul, in speaking of the branches of Israel, says—"If some of the branches be broken off and thou, (the Gentiles) being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches. But if thou boast thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou (that is the Gentiles) wilt say then, the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded but fear, for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God on them (meaning Israel) which feel severity; but towards thee (the Gentiles) goodness if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also (the house of Israel) if they abide not in unbelief shall be grafted in again, for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou (the Gentiles) wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved. As it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election they are beloved for the fathers' sake." Again he says in the 30th and 31st verses—"For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief, even so have these now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy."

We can see from the instructions that Paul has given, in this chapter, that the Gentiles were grafted in instead of the House of Israel, in other words, the Jews were broken off, as our Savior predicted to them. Said he—"Therefore say I unto you that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." That is, it should be taken from the Israelites, and delivered over into the hands of the Gentiles. The kingdom that was thus rent from the Jews and transferred to the Gentiles may be called a spiritual kingdom, inasmuch as the Saints, to whom the kingdom was given in that day, did not form any particular constituent portion of the nations of the earth, but here was a branch, and there was a branch, one in one place and another in another; having received the blessings of the fulness of the gospel, the blessings of that spiritual kingdom which was built up in their midst, they partook of the fatness of the olive tree, though they were wild branches. But by and by we find the Gentiles following after the same example of unbelief; they to whom the kingdom had been transferred from Israel got into darkness, unbelief and apostasy, the same as the Jews had done before them. Paul further warns them in this chapter not to boast. Says he—"Boast not against the branches, but if thou boast thou bearest not the root but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Take heed, therefore, lest you also shall fall after the same example of unbelief."

Have they taken heed? No, they have not. Where is that kingdom that was transferred to the Gentiles, that had inspired apostles and prophets in it? That kingdom upon which the Lord shed forth the Holy Ghost and all its gifts—the gift of revelation, discerning of spirits, seeing angels, healing the sick, foretelling future events, visions and all the other gifts which came through the operation of his Spirit upon the wild branches of the olive tree, after they were grafted, through obedience to the gospel, and became partakers of the root and fatness of the tame olive?

Where is that kingdom? In other words, where is the church? It is said by some that the church has continued from the apostolic period down until the present century of the Christian era. But if it has, I cannot find it, the researches I have made give me no indication of the existence of the kingdom, that was transferred to the hands of the Gentiles. I know of no way to distinguish the church of God, only by comparing it with the pattern given in the New Testament. Can I find among any of the gentile nations a church with inspired apostles in it? If I cannot I have no authority to pronounce any such church the church of God. Its members may believe in the Bible and they may be honest, we do not dispute the honesty of men, but unless they have this distinguishing characteristic of the church of the living God we have no right to suppose them to be the real, true Christian church. Let us hear what Paul says in the 12th chapter of Corinthians in relation to the organization of the church of Christ. We there find that the church have placed within it, first, apostles, secondarily, prophets, thirdly, teachers, after that working of miracles, healing the sick, speaking with divers tongues, interpretation of tongues &c., and, all these were helps, governments, gifts, blessings, authorities and powers that served to characterize the true kingdom or church of God from all those that were destitute of this power and authority. Did this authority, these gifts and blessings exist towards the close of the second century of the Christian era? No. What had become of them? The people had entirely apostatized from that ancient order of things. There were no doubt many who were very zealous and who professed Christianity, and claimed to be the church of God, but where were their apostles? Nowhere to be found among men. Where were the prophets in what was called the Christian church towards the latter part of the second century? Nowhere upon the face of the earth; the spirit of prophecy was entirely rooted out, and the Gentiles, through apostasy and unbelief, had fallen as the Jews had done before them.

Again, where were the healing of the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping deaf ears, and the lame leaping like a hart? Where were all those ancient gifts, such as speaking with tongues, interpretation of tongues, beholding angels, discerning spirits and the things of God as did the church of Christ in the first century? Nowhere to be found; but instead of this we find the people called Christians, spreading and increasing in the second, third, fourth and fifth centuries, but destitute of the spirit, power and gifts which characterized the ancient church, so much so that they even denied that there could be any more revelation, and instead of there being prophets to live revelation day by day, week by week and year after year from one generation to another, they were obliged, at the Council of Carthage, held at the close of the fourth century of the Christian era, to gather up such fragments of the ancient revelations as they could find, here and there, scattered in manuscript among the various nations, sit in judgment upon them, without any spirit of revelation to designate to them whether they were true or false; and they compiled them together, and pronounced the canon of Scripture full.

Now, if they had had the ancient Christian Church, there would have been revelations during all of the second century as well as the first, and there would have been revelations in the third century, and in the fourth century, and in all the subsequent centuries down to the present period of time, and there would have been no such doctrine promulgated among the children of men as the canon of Scripture being full. It is one of the most false doctrines ever advanced among the children of men. God never yet had a people on the face of the earth in any age of the world from the creation down through all the dispensations, without having inspired men among them, who could call upon God and receive revelations, and their revelations were just as sacred as those which had preceded them and that had been bound into volumes; hence the canon of Scripture would have been enlarged every century down to the present time had the church of God continued on the earth. But like the ancient Jews, the Christians of the second and following centuries