

## REVELATION.

## And What It Has Done for the World.

*A Lecture Delivered by Elder Charles W. Stayner, in the Twentieth Ward Meeting House, on Sunday Evening, May 6th, 1888.*

[REPORTED BY W. AND E. BONNEY.]

I have felt with regard to the important subject allotted for this evening's lecture, that it would be more appropriate on my part to prepare my mind and also my body, that I might be a fitting receptacle for the spirit of revelation, than to prepare a stereotyped and formal address. I desire on this occasion to be a suitable instrument through which the Lord can speak such things as will be for the edification, comfort and blessing of those who have assembled. And for this reason, I wish not to be hampered too closely by the limitations of time, or reminded of its rapid expiration by the snapping of watches or the rustling of impatience. We are dealing with a subject that is vast as eternity, which incorporates all things, past, present and to come, and upon which we must depend for the hope of everlasting salvation; and it would be pleasing to me, if every mind this evening could be called in from the cares of the world, and centered upon these solemn thoughts. The first point to be discussed is—

## WHAT IS REVELATION?

As I understand it, revelation is the signification of God's power in speaking to His children—the utterances of the Father to His offspring, for their salvation, spiritual and temporal. And the manifestation of this power is just as great and as mighty, as the manifestation of God's power in other ways; as great as it is in the trembling of the earthquake, the rumbling of the thunder, the roaring of the cataract, or the flashing of the lightning. Elijah, the Prophet, refers to this, when he says there was "a great, strong wind, but the Lord was not in the wind." There was an earthquake, but He was not in that. It was the still, small voice of revelation, that spoke with the grandeur of God's greatest power to the Prophet.

Revelation is the operation of the Holy Ghost, in making manifest to the mind of man the will, the purposes and designs of the Almighty, while other manifestations operate more upon the external senses,—an evidence that the spiritual is greater than the material; perhaps more silent in its operations but always more powerful and permanent in its results.

The next question is, how does revelation come, or by what means does the Deity express His will to man, when He desires to reveal it? It is not only necessary to know that revelation is the communication of the Father's will to His offspring, but we should also understand how the information is imparted, so that being acquainted with God's methods we may be the better prepared to hearken to His still, small voice, and put into prudent and proper execution the commandments conveyed by revelation. We have to refer largely upon this point, to the

## EXPERIENCES OF THE PAST,

as shown in sacred history. How has revelation in the past been given to the world? In the first place, God has not personally gone forth in His glory, to the nations of the earth, and spoken from the public platforms, entered into the pulpits of the various churches and cathedrals, and promiscuously addressed the people. Nor has He stood upon the street corners, clad in all the panoply of His power, and heralded His will with a voice of thunder. It is true He has personally visited some of His sons, and revealed great things to them, as He did to Abraham, Moses and Joseph Smith, but in the merciful design of heaven God has generally selected "men with like passions unto ourselves," as Paul says, through whom to minister the Divine will unto their fellows, after having revealed it. And when raising up these special messengers from time to time, in the various epochs and generations, He has chosen different methods of communicating His commands to those messengers. Sometimes these persons were called prophets, some were called seers, and others have been prophets, seers and revelators, according to their gifts, duty and mission. The Lord has varied somewhat in the manner of these manifestations, which probably was largely owing to a difference in the individuals themselves; the natural constitution and organization as well as the mental and spiritual peculiarities of the Prophet. This variety has also been occasioned partly by the different circumstances and conditions of the people, and the generation for whose benefit the servant of God was sent forth, and the nature of the message he was to deliver. Consequently on some occasions, God has given revelation to a man by appearing in person and speaking with his own voice, as He did to Moses. At other times He has sent an

## ANGEL FROM HEAVEN

to utter His message to man, as in the case of Cornelius. Again, He has at times impressed men with His spirit to such an extent that the will of God was manifested to their minds, so that they could say, like Jeremiah, "Thus saith the Lord!" Also as it was given through Isaiah, Malachi and others of those ancient prophets who wrote

their glorious testimony with poetic fire, and sent down to our age in words of beautiful simplicity, their predictions concerning the "latter days." God impressed these souls with His prophetic spirit. He sowed the spiritual seed in the fertile furrows of their minds, and it sprang forth unto life everlasting. It was like Divinity begetting in the mind of man the glorious gift of revelation, to make him more like his Father—God. In other words, it was the planting of the tree of inspired thought in the garden of the intellect, to bear all manner of fruits for the sustenance of the Saints, and whose leaves should be for the healing of the nations. God has set the seal of inspiration upon the minds of His chosen servants—men doubtless selected before the world was—and in the fullness of this blessing they have declared in His name the doctrines of His church, and the events which would come to pass in the world's history. In other cases, such as that of Daniel for instance, the Lord manifested Himself in other ways. On one occasion when Daniel fasted for twenty-one days, eating no pleasant food, God sent an angel to him, and this angel portrayed before his mental vision, or rather his spiritual vision I might say, as doubtless it was his spiritual eyes which beheld the things shown him; the grand and beautiful symbolism of the world's history; that which has been so often referred to, as the vision of the four beasts, which I will not detail here this evening, and with which all readers of Scripture are acquainted. In this manner the Lord made manifest the future of the world; thus symbolizing the rising up of the four greatest empires mankind has ever seen, and from which have descended the smaller nations which now control the eastern world. And then by the voice of this angel God revealed to Daniel the meaning of the vision. Described the

## STRANGE SYMBOLISM,

turned the key in the lock of mystery and made manifest to his mind, so that he could write the same in plain language, the things which were to come to pass throughout more than two thousand years of the world's future. When God spoke to Adam in the Garden of Eden, He appeared in person and there gave commandments and information. If the Lord had not informed Adam, with regard to the existence of the tree in the garden which was not good for food, but which possessed certain elements of death, and which would cause Adam and his posterity sickness and sorrow, it would have been a reflection upon His justice. And to have placed such a tree in the garden without warning its occupants of the fact, would have been inconsistent with the kindness of the Creator. In fact revelation must be regarded rather in the light of giving information, than the one in which many people look upon it today. It is not because a prophet predicts a calamity, that the calamity comes to pass, so much as it is the fact that the spirit which forces all things, reveals through the prophet that such things exist and such events will transpire. We have but to refer to the experiences of Noah and the antediluvians to see this point. It was not because Noah declared that a flood would come and sweep the earth, and destroy the inhabitants thereof, that the flood came. But it was because the flood was destined to come, in order to cause the earth and give it its baptism of water by immersion, that the Lord raised up the prophet and called him to warn the people of its approach, giving them ample time to prepare themselves by righteousness, for their safety. What did revelation accomplish at that time? It accomplished the preservation of a remnant, the saving of a few persons—eight souls—so that the earth might be replenished by this typical Adam, who went forth again after landing upon the mount and became a ruling power over a great posterity, a patriarch as well as a prophet under God's command. What is the purpose or object of revelation? Always to benefit man, and happily the inhabitants of the earth.

## REVELATION

sent Abraham from the land of Mesopotamia into Egypt for this purpose. God has in His mind the blessing of the human race in every act that He performs with regard to revealing His will to man. We look back to-day upon the ancient Egyptians and we say that their land was the cradle of learning. How did they get it? They got it from the Patriarch Abraham, who was sent from his home with the spirit of his mission, and he went among the Egyptians, and there he taught them the science of astronomy and the art of architecture. It seems that the arts which they manifested in building, are lost to the world today, that the most scientific of our architects fail to determine how the pyramids were built. We do not know how the Egyptians accomplished the great works which they did in the direction of architecture, as well as their skill in the preservation of their dead, and many other works peculiar to themselves. And for many centuries what was learned from the Egyptians with regard to astronomy was all there was in the scientific world on the subject. And if what was handed down was imperfect; if it varied from the truth in any particular, it was because the key to the mystery was lost and revelation ceased among them, and they like all other people in the absence of it, followed after tradition and substituted man's wisdom

for the truth of heaven. And the falsehood that may have found its way to our time, with regard to the sciences and arts, was not the result of revelation, but was caused by men seeking out for themselves the things they failed to receive from a heavenly source, through inspired men.

Concerning other methods of communicating revelations,—take for instance Joseph in the land of Egypt. He did not come forth like Jeremiah or Isaiah, and say, "Thus saith the Lord!" but stated he had had a dream, or some one else had, and he gave the interpretation of it by the power of God. And the interpretation came to pass. This was another form of revelation. It was a revelation to the butler of Pharaoh in the dungeon of Egypt, that he should again bear the cup of his master. But the object of revelation is still more important, if possible, than the methods of its communication.

## TO MAKE KNOWN TO MAN.

the great purposes of life, regarding his salvation. To show him the road to eternal glory, to mark out a safe and secure path, in which the Saints may walk. All this is most important. When the Lord wanted to protect the people in the days of Noah, He revealed to him the coming of the flood; but there was also another and still greater object in relation to it, not merely to preserve the people from temporal destruction, but to save them from the effects of their sins by calling them to repentance. "They were eating, and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," and were corrupt before the Lord, and consequently they had to be chastened. Sometimes the voice of revelation speaks in words of comfort to the weary and disconsolate. Sometimes it speaks in the sweet tone of hope to those who are despairing and downcast. At other times, it is the voice of chastisement and correction, or the voice of caution, lest the chastisement may follow. And God, in His kindness and mercy communicates to His offspring the course they should follow, to reach His presence and dwell in His glory. And we may ask right here, what is the reason, this being the purpose of God in giving revelation to man, and communicating His will, knowledge and mystery to the mind of His offspring, what is the reason after He has so communicated information and doctrine, and warned the world, that man should suffer sorrow? What is the historical record with regard to this? What has been the fact from the very beginning with regard to this? It has been that where disobedience to the things which have been revealed has followed the revelation, sorrow, pain, suffering, disease and death have been the results. If all the world had accepted the truths which the Lord revealed to any one prophet, they would have escaped the penalty of disobedience. This is very plain in the case of Jonah being sent to the city of Nineveh to cry upon the walls of that city, "repent for in forty days Nineveh shall be destroyed." The whole city at the requirement of the king went into sackcloth and ashes, and

## REPENTED OF THEIR SINS,

and turned from their evil ways, and asked the Lord for forgiveness. And He saved the city. And Jonah felt almost disappointed because his prediction had apparently failed. But the Lord repents himself of any promises of punishment, when His people return unto him with humble hearts and are obedient to His laws. Consequently He showed Jonah by the symbol of a withered gourd which died over his head, the necessity of His having saved the city. The many thousands of inhabitants it contained having returned unto Him, at least for the time being; it would have been an injustice to destroy them. And in the case of any prophet who has been sent to the world, and who uttered the declaration of God's will to the people, and made predictions concerning the calamities which would follow a disobedience of those commands, if the people had hearkened to that Prophet, and followed in the footsteps which he marked out as the pathway of righteousness, they would have escaped the difficulties which followed his rejection. Christ Himself was the typical Prophet. Almost every sentence, I will say every sentence of His teachings was a revelation. Everything which he uttered was filled with the spirit of revelation. It was for the good of man. It was a perpetual warning to the ungodly, and a kindly caution to those who were straying from the path of righteousness, teaching doctrines which they should receive in order to obtain the blessings of eternal life. What was the result to those who obeyed it? It was the testimony of Jesus Christ operating and moving upon their hearts. For the law of the Father which Christ taught them was sealed upon their minds by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, which dwelt in their hearts as a recompense of obedience, and to lead, guide and strengthen them, so that they could say with Job of old, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand in the latter days upon the earth," and so that they could go through trials and difficulties for the gospel's sake. For we must remember that although sorrow and trouble have legitimately followed a rejection of the Prophets, at the same time those who have obeyed the law and the requirements of the Gospel, have also at times been required to suffer for His name's sake. But how different their feelings! While the disobedient suffered like those without hope, the faithful saw by the

## PROPHETIC LIGHT

within them, the joy which was to follow their suffering. They saw by faith beyond the veil the glory which awaits those who willingly endure for Christ's sake. They, like unto Paul and Silas when sitting in the jail with their feet in the stocks, sang psalms of praise to God, and glorified Him because of their experience; not boasting at all over the world, but rejoicing because the spirit of revelation within them showed them that these trials were the stepping-stones to glory and exaltation. And that by humbly and patiently bearing these things, they were testifying to the truth of heaven which God had revealed to their own minds and hearts. Men are not willing to suffer for what they don't believe. Consequently, it being the purpose of the Almighty to benefit man by giving him revelation, those who have received it, have enjoyed the benefit and the blessings themselves, and been required to testify of it, in various ways, for the benefit of others. While on the other hand the real sorrow of the world of those who have heard revelation, has been caused by its rejection. Such events, for instance as the destruction of Jerusalem show this very plainly. One single utterance of Jesus was a revelation to the Saints upon this point. He said, "When ye see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then flee to the mountains." This was a short sentence, but it had a wonderful scope of meaning. After Jesus was crucified, and within a few years of that time, one of the Roman generals came with his armies and surrounded the city of Jerusalem. The Saints were still there. Those who believed the words of Christ and had received the revelations of God, were there, as well as those who rejected them. How were they to be protected and how was this caution of the Savior to be followed? For some unknown reason, historians state, they cannot tell why, they give no reason for their own conjecture, but they say "that for some unknown reason" the general called the armies away from the walls of the city and took them off a little distance by themselves. During this particular period the Saints had time to escape, and those who believed in the word of the Lord, gathered up just what they could carry in their hands and fled to the mountains and escaped, while those who

## HEARKENED NOT

to the spirit of revelation through the Savior and fled not to the mountains, had no other opportunity, for soon the armies returned, and after the siege the disobedient were taken out, and a great many of them were crucified upon crosses set around the walls of the city, and others were sold as slaves and went into captivity. The suffering in that besieged city was so great that women actually ate their own children to save themselves from starvation. Consequently the revelation of Jesus Christ to the people in this simple sentence was life to those who obeyed it, and death to those who disobeyed and rejected His testimony. The Lord has produced a great many results, which have been of benefit to the world, through revelation. There were certain men who lived in the East, just prior to the confounding of the original language; who through having it revealed to them concerning this chosen land of America, and being moved upon by the Holy Spirit, went before the Lord in prayer and there received instruction with regard to the building of vessels. And the finger of God Himself, at the request of the brother of Jared, touched certain stones, and made them give light in those vessels, that their people might cross the mighty waters and come to this land. As a result a people grew up here called the people of Jared. Jared and his brother were the patriarchs of that posterity. But in the course of years after that time they fell into corruption, and were destroyed—that is, succeeding generations were. Again in the case of Lehi, you will remember in reading the Book of Mormon, how beautifully it is told; that just before the Babylonish captivity, he was warned of the Lord, and was commanded to come across the mighty waters to this land. And by heeding this revelation he was saved from the captivity and became the patriarch of a great posterity. The Nephites and the Lamanites upon this continent are descendants and remnants of this great family. And it was not until they sinned against the

## LAWS OF HEAVEN

and forsook the Almighty, and went into crime and corruption, that the Lord suffered them to be wasted away, and some to become a dark and a loathsome people, while others were entirely destroyed. While those who disbelieved the testimony of Lehi, in Jerusalem, and who rejected the warning of Jeremiah and the other prophets who foretold the captivity, were enslaved for seventy years. Those who would not heed this testimony fell into the hands of the Chaldeans, and suffered many sorrows. The reason that the Jews have been scattered in all the nations of the earth, is because they rejected the revelations of God. Because they declined to receive that great Prophet that was to be raised up like unto Moses; and who came in the meridian of time, and declared unto them the words of salvation and of truth. How has revelation operated upon the world so as to produce the condition of things as we now find them? It has operated in the interest of inventions and discoveries for the world's good. It has helped

to bring to light the wonders of scientific truth, and blessed the world with many great thoughts and numerous advantages perhaps unrecognized. Let me tell you here, my brethren and sisters and friends, that it was revelation that God manifested itself through the visions of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of Columbus, that brought to light this new continent; new to the world, because generations had passed since they heard of it. And they knew nothing except by revelation concerning the existence of a remnant of those people who long before gone from Jerusalem to the posterity of Lehi upon this continent. Scientific research fails to determine who were the fathers of this posterity that wander through the American forests, who come here and ask for a morsel of food. But revelation has told us, as has the history of this people, and the causes of their sorrow and have been made plain. Revelation teaches us that the day will come when they will again be a white and a light-skinned people. Columbus moved upon by the Holy Spirit, came to the mighty waters in the 15th century, came here and discovered this land. Do you suppose that it was by man? Do you suppose that God had nothing and cared nothing about great things? I tell you that God the organizer and ruler of the universe and His hand has moved all from the beginning for the salvation of His people. America is the

## LAND OF ZION,

and it has been brought to light in the recent century for the very purpose of establishing His great Church; and has been preparing the people and their institutions on it ever since. Columbus did not know anything pertaining to this land. But he was moved upon by the power of the Holy Spirit in the due time of the Lord His purposes in the generations to follow might be carried out. And the records which were discovered by the Prophet Joseph Smith in our own generation were hid away in the hill Cumorah 1400 years before they were discovered. They were here when Columbus came but he did not find them because he knew nothing about them. Every Prophet and individual is moved according to his particular sphere of calling in the great work of God. The universe was created by His power. God is the Father of all the people who inhabit it; and His spirits are His own offspring, and He is interested in all of them. Consequently when I say the great work of God, I do not merely allude to the which has been revealed in the latter days. Columbus was a servant of God raised up for this special purpose, to find the records, but to discover the land upon which these records were to be found. And in the due course of time God had others that He raised up to accomplish further things in relation to the salvation of His people. And among these we find the little boy, called Joseph Smith, who while in his youth—almost in his infancy—was called "Old Joe Smith." This was only the fate of other Prophets, to be ridiculed, derided and maligned. We hear of the ancient Prophet Elisha, whom they said, "go up thou old head!" And the power of God revealed down upon him to such an extent that the curse of the Almighty fell upon those who ridiculed His servant. Not because a man has a defect that cannot be chosen of God, and endowed with spiritual power. Now the Prophet Joseph, what was he sent for? The same great purpose. God had in view the salvation of this latter-day generation. He intended to bring to light this precious record, which had been hid away in the Hill Cumorah, hid away by the Prophet Moroni, of the seed of Lehi. And this Prophet came as an angel of God, and revealed the

## BLESSED BOY, JOSEPH,

where these records were to be found, and what was the object of them. And he was told that it was not to make money out of them; that it was for the purpose of speculation that they were to be delivered into their hands, but that he must purify himself with an eye single to God's glory, that His people might be brought to the light of the gospel. And it was shown to him that the Christian world in the beginning had the gospel in its purity, as given by Christ to His disciples, but that the people had subsequently, through the lack of revelation, lost the true spirit of the gospel and had fallen into error. They had followed after tradition and folly and had adopted in many respects the precepts of men, and largely abandoned those truths which had been revealed from heaven. And that now was the time and this was the day when God would set His hand the second time to gather the remnant of His people which was scattered among the nations of the earth. Those of the house of Judah who had become a "bless and a by-word," and also those of the house of Israel who, as the prophet says, had been "sprinkled among all people." That the day would come when the Lord was going to bring this people together again, and give to them the blessings which He had promised to their forefathers. Was there anything very strange in such a Prophet rising up and saying that the Lord had revealed this to him? Was there anything peculiar in the Lord choosing this little boy, like David of old, instead of the Archbishop of some great church?