

THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 21.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, MAY 9, 1896.

VOL. LII.

TIMES AND SEASONS.

Discourse delivered at the General Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Morning, April 5th, 1896, by
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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

After the very precious instructions that we have been listening to from our First Presidency in the Church and in the Priesthood, I feel on being called upon to speak, as though it was not following the rule of giving the best at the last of the feast; but being thus called, I desire to give my testimony with the rest of my brethren. And in this vast congregation, while it is difficult for us to make all hear, I would ask the people kindly to be as quiet as they can, so that we may most of us hear, and I will try to speak so as to be heard; and if the Lord pleases to give us a generous measure of His Holy Spirit we may still be edified.

I have been exceedingly refreshed by the instructions of yesterday and today, and I realize that it is an instructive, interesting and important time in which we live; and if we can but understand the importance of the times and the circumstances that surround and attend upon us, no person who possesses the spirit of Zion, can be otherwise than happy and rejoice in the multitude of the tender mercies of our God which He is bestowing upon His people. It was said by an ancient wise man that "there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven." There is a time to sow and a time to reap, a time to plant and a time to gather. There are times when it appears as if all nature was by the frost of life not only hidden up, but when the severity is so great that it seems as if it must be killed outright, and that vegetation could not start in the spring. Then again we see the opposite extreme in the summer, when the heat is so great that human flesh and blood faints and subsides before it. Now, when we look at the great work of the Lord in the last days, there is quite a similarity in the course of God's providences to His people to what there is in the course of the seasons of the revolving years. The work of the Lord has had its times of refreshing and sunshine, of sowing and of maturing, and reaping the plentiful, the bounteous, the glorious harvest in the temples of God for instance, as they have been completed and dedicated, and as we have received the blessings of heaven therein. While on the other hand there have been times of persecution, affliction, sorrow and distress,

until to all outward appearance it would seem as if the tree of life which God had planted in the earth had been about frozen to death.

Such was a time in Missouri, when the Prophet and his immediate associates were in prison together; when other brethren by the score were in other prisons; when the voice of the military chieftain told us we need never expect to see our Prophet again, and we were, with all military sternness informed that we must locate as other people locate, and never organize again in ward and stakes, under bishops and presidents. The consummation of that serious event looked like destruction for the Church. We were banished from the state, and it took all that winter with all the brethren could do to help everybody get out from those distressing conditions and into the State of Illinois. There spring opened. There was found a feeling of kindness, benevolence and generosity on the part of the good people of the City of Quincy and the regions round about; brethren came and went, took up farms, worked them upon shares, hired out, and did whatever they could to sustain life, get their families located, and overcome the adversities of the previous year.

What was the result? As this spring weather opened to them, they got situations and labor. In a little while the Prophet Joseph came along, having been delivered by the almighty power of God, also his brother Hyrum, and the brethren of the Apostles. Directly the work of the Lord began to prosper, Brother Joseph purchased a place for Nauvoo, bought out Commerce, because it was so sickly that other people could not live there. Nauvoo was built up in the short space of seven years, and a temple was built there which cost about a million dollars. That was a glorious summer's work. Our Elders went everywhere preaching the word, explaining to the people around them the faith that we were persecuted for and driven from state to state, telling them what was the cause of the terrible frosty winter that we had been passing through; and it had its effects. Many people were gathered in. Nauvoo became a glorious city. People came from New Orleans, from New York and from Canada to find out and hear the word of the Prophet Joseph, and to see what these people were doing, because they made the welkin ring from morning till night with the saw and hammer, building up that beautiful place.

Well, before the temple was completed our Prophet laid down his life, having been led like a lamb to the slaughter. But the work of the Lord went on. Our treaties with our enemies

allowed us a certain period to get our wagons together, and another terrible winter set in upon us. We had the journey over the prairies of Iowa, the period of sickness, the cold of the winter, the suffering in Winter Quarters; and we journeyed over the plains exiled—Israel in the wilderness—the kingdom of God on wheels—for about two years, till we arrived in this "great American desert"—a country of sagebrush, grease-wood, wolves and Indians. We got here and winter began to break again. A little experience soon taught us that the Lord would bless and prosper us and make the earth fruitful for our sakes, after striving to keep His commandments and to do His will. We had hardly got located here, however, just so that we could spend the 24th of July and have a good dinner under a bowery, when at the following conference the Twelve were started off—President Lorenzo Snow to Italy, Erastus Snow to Denmark, John Taylor to France and Germany, and Franklin D. Richards to England. The Elders went abroad everywhere preaching the Gospel, and found people willing to hear. What was the matter with this people, driven out from the nation and having to become a people to themselves? And yet the Gospel spread abroad. In England and other European countries, people were added to the Church by the thousands and tens of thousands in wonderful rapidity. The work of the Lord prospered, and we had another summer time to a certain extent, locating settlements all over this country and building four temples. Then behold, another winter set in.

You know, winters are not always of the same temperature. We sometimes have a winter that freezes so hard that bark on the trees becomes loose, and then we have other winters that are mild. Well, we had a winter set in here that was so severe that nearly all manner of business was closed up—except the marshals, the attorneys, the courts and the penitentiary; they were about the only line of prosperous business that was done here during that winter of some six to twelve years ago. Now, the Lord has seemed to cause these things to work in this way. It seems to be a natural periodic state that we pass through from time to time. It happened that during this winter, when we could not be abroad preaching the Gospel (for you must know our Elders went sometimes clear to the sea and back again and reported that they could not get a house to speak in anywhere, not even a congregation out of doors), the supreme court in Washington, had our leading men's characters brought up there and canvassed, and the decisions of those courts were pub-