

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

ELDER ORSON PRATT,

At the General Conference, Friday
Afternoon, Oct. 8, 1880.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

It is to be hoped that in this large assembly every one will studiously seek to be as still as possible, that there may be an opportunity of hearing. I do not suppose there will be much business presented before the Conference this afternoon, and I have been requested to speak, which I am willing to do, and desire to do in a manner that shall be acceptable to the Lord and also instructive and edifying to the Latter-day Saints.

I will commence by reading a promise that was given by our Lord in the month of May, 1833—a promise made to all of the Latter-day Saints, not to a few individuals, not to the members of the Church alone, but to every person in all the world. This promise will be found in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants (page 328 new edition) as follows:—"Verily, thus saith the Lord, it shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh their sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am, and that I am the true light that giveth light unto every man that cometh into the world; and that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one." This is a great promise which the Lord has made to all of his people, male and female. I esteem it to be one of the great characteristics of the Latter-day dispensation, one of the great and important promises made to the children of mortality, one that deeply concerns us all. This promise, however, is made on certain conditions, some of which are here specified. One of these conditions in regard to this matter will be found in a revelation given on the 22nd day of September, 1832, which reads: "And this greater Priesthood—speaking of the order of the Son of God—"administereth the Gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom even the key of the knowledge of God; therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is made manifest; and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the Priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live." This Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness and sought diligently to sanctify them, that they might behold the face of God. But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence, therefore the holy Priesthood was taken out of their midst and also Moses holding that Priesthood, and the lesser Priesthood continued, even the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys in regard to outward ordinances and the keys of the ministration of angels and the law of carnal commandments which the Lord in His wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John. I may not have repeated word for word in the language of the revelation, but I have given you at least the substance. Before that time—the time when the higher Priesthood was taken from amongst the children of Israel—they enjoyed all the privileges of the Gospel in various dispensations from the days of Adam down until the days of Moses, namely, the privilege I have just read in your hearing of seeing the face of God. In every dispensation? Yes. Standing in the presence of God in every dispensation in this temporal life? Yes. When was there ever a generation or a people from Adam to the days of Moses when this principle was not exhibited provided that a dispensation of God was among them? I do not know of any. Were there any dispensations in which the higher Priesthood did not exist? I do not know of any. It is true the Lord in calling His servants in these early ages of the world had a particular order, but He did not always confine Himself to that particular order in regard to lineage. The order that God ordained and established on the earth in the days of Adam was that the first born was entitled by right to the grand order of patriarchal government, including the High Priesthood after the order of the Son of God. Adam was the first man in mortality in this probation that had

this great and glorious and high and heavenly calling conferred upon him. There is no dubiety in our minds in regard to this matter. It is revealed, it is declared in the revelations that are printed to which you all have access, that Adam himself as the first man in mortality received not only the Gospel, but the Priesthood. I do not know that I can repeat this revelation word for word, but I will state the substance of it. The Spirit of the Lord was upon our father Adam, and conversed with him, made known unto him in great plainness the plan of salvation, taught him concerning baptism in water, told him the reason why he should be baptized in water, that it was a similitude, or in other words, something that was similar to our natural birth into the world; and after having explained to him the Gospel, saying that he and his children must be baptized in water and should receive the Holy Ghost which should bear record of the Father and the Son and should make manifest unto him the things of the kingdom of God, and the things necessary for him to understand in his probationary state in order to get back again into the kingdom of his Father in the heavens. While the spirit of God was still upon him, Adam believing, he called upon the name of the Lord. What was the effect of this? The Spirit of the Lord took him—now I don't want you to spiritualize this as the sectarians do—to a place where there was water, that Spirit placed him beneath the water, brought him forth out of the water, and thus Adam was baptized, the first baptism that pertains to mortal man here on the earth. What next? The everlasting Priesthood was given to him on that occasion, for the Spirit said unto him, "thou art after the order of Him that is without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to eternity." What a great blessing to be permitted to enjoy that Priesthood that had no beginning, a Priesthood that was without father, without mother, a Priesthood that was from all eternity to all eternity. Adam received this entered into the order of it, and became a High Priest forever after the order of Him who is eternal, namely the Son of God. Then after this the Lord gave many revelations, and he gave a pattern, as you can read here in this book, after which the people should write, and they commenced writing the things of God, they commenced writing their genealogies, they commenced writing concerning the Gospel and concerning the Priesthood. They named their book which they wrote in those days the Book of Numbers—that is to number that which God had spoken, to number the genealogies, to number the Gospel as it was revealed, to number the prophecies as they were delivered, and this Book of Numbers was written by the inspiration of the Most High God. In this Book of Numbers kept by the forefathers it was recorded that the first born among the descendants of Adam should have conferred upon them the everlasting Priesthood, the patriarchal power to govern over their seed. Here, then, is what might be termed a temporal order, a political government combined with a spiritual order revealed from heaven. It was all one in those days. The management and government of the children of God were dictated by revelation, by the Priesthood, by the patriarchal power, by the laws that were communicated from the heavens unto the children of men.

The next one that received this Priesthood of which we have any account was Abel. Adam had a numerous family, how many this book does not tell us, but they were so numerous that they were scattered over the face of the land two and two. Adam and Eve begat sons and daughters, and they united in marriage, two and two, and scattered abroad on the face of the land. You all have the history in this book as to what took place in regard to two of these sons, Cain and Abel.

It seems that some of the others, according to the record given, were rebels. A great many of them did not hearken unto the Lord, did not keep His commandments, and became quite wicked before the heavens. The Lord, it would seem, conferred the Priesthood upon Abel, and he offered a sacrifice that was acceptable before the Lord. Cain undertook to imitate it in some measure by offering the fruits of the ground; but his heart being corrupt, not having faith, it was not accepted of the Lord. Cain felt angry about it, and his countenance fell,

yet the Lord condescended to talk with him on the subject. "Why art thou wroth," said the Lord, "and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And Satan desireth to have thee; and except thou shalt hearken unto my commandments I will deliver thee up, and it shall be unto thee according to his desire, and thou shalt rule over him," etc., according to the new translation. Well, Cain did not repent, but hardened his heart, and finally built up a secret combination—that is, he gathered the posterity of Adam who were rebellious, and organized quite a large combination. The object of the combination was to plunder, to steal, to obtain political power outside of the order that God had established, and Satan was the founder of it. He gave them all the various plans pertaining to it and built up a combination that was wicked in the extreme. Cain being one of the most wicked of all that combination, he was appointed the chief captain, the great Grand Master. Do you want to know his name? Grand Master Mahan.

After Abel was murdered Adam still had the High Priesthood. It was the great governing power appointed by the Almighty. The Priesthood was not taken from the earth. It was still held by the first man of all, and when 130 years had passed away, a person by the name of Seth came on the stage of action; and he hearkened to the voice of the Lord, gave heed to the instructions of his father, Adam, and the Priesthood was conferred upon him. By and bye, a little over one hundred years after Seth obtained the Priesthood, Enos was born, and Enos hearkened to the words of God, and the Priesthood was conferred upon him, and after a few years he begat a son whom he called Cainan, the fourth generation from Adam. At that time the people of God had become quite numerous. They were scattered over the face of the land, and the wicked were among them, and so great was the wickedness that prevailed among the descendants of Adam, that it was counseled by Enos that he and all the residue of the righteous should flee out of the land. They fled out about 325 years after Adam was placed on the earth. The land which they had occupied prior to that time was called the land of Shulon. Where it was I do not know, it is not revealed. I suppose Adam went with them, although it does not say so, it only says that "Enos and the residue of the people of God came out from the land, which was called Shulon, and dwelt in a land of promise. I mention some of these circumstances to show you the early history of the Priesthood, the early history of the dealings of God with the children of men, as revealed to us in this generation. They seemed to maintain a foothold in this land to which they fled. It might have been north of Jackson County for aught I know. There seem to be some old ruins in Davis County in the State of Missouri, and no doubt there were altars built there. We know from verbal revelation, not written, that Adam built an altar in that country and offered sacrifices thereon. They maintained a foothold from 325 years after Adam came upon the stage of being down from generation to generation to the days of Enoch; for Cainan begat Mahalaleel; Mahalaleel begat Jared; and Jared begat Enoch, who was the seventh from Adam. Enoch being wrought upon by the Spirit of God, left the land of Cainan, where all the righteous were living, and went forth on a foreign mission, the same as many of our Elders now go forth. He traveled eastward from the land of Cainan till he came to the borders of the sea. What sea it was I do not know. The Atlantic ocean flows between the great eastern continent and the western, but whether that ocean was there in the days of Adam I do not know. There is one thing certain, however, that from the days of Adam down to the days of Peleg, the earth was not divided. At any rate Enoch traveled eastward and he came to the sea shore, and the Lord appeared to him. The Lord does not appear to people that do not have the Priesthood according to the revelation that I have already repeated. I mean—do not misunderstand me—he does not appear to those who have not been administered through the order of the Priesthood, male and female, Enoch having been in the land of Cainan was administered unto and taught in the ways of God. He had the privilege of seeing the face of God, and God revealed

himself to him even after he started on his mission. What did the Lord say to him? "Anoint thine eyes with clay, and wash them, and thou shalt see." Enoch did as he was commanded, and his spiritual eyes were opened so that he could see those things which were not visible to the natural eyes of men. One of the first visions given to him was to show him what God had created before the foundation of the world. He saw the spirits of men that God had made before the world was made. What a wonderful power was bestowed upon this man through that simple ordinance that he was commanded to attend to! He saw the spirits of men as they existed before this world was formed; and it says he saw things that could not be seen by the natural eye. And the Lord commanded him to lift up his voice in the east country near the sea shore to the nations who had forgotten God, and he did so. It was quite a marvel to the people, for he spake with great power and fear came upon them and they durst not lay hands on him, to destroy him. "And they came forth to hear him, upon the high places, saying unto the tent keepers, Tarry ye here and keep the tents, while we go yonder to behold the Seer, for he prophesieth, and there is a strange thing in the land; a wild man hath come among us." Enoch declared the things of God not in a temple or in a tabernacle, or in any public building, but in the "high places" and "upon the hills" wherever he could get the people congregated together. And they begged to ask him some questions. They asked him "Tell us plainly what thou art, and from whence thou comest?" And Enoch in answer to the questions put to him said, "I came out from the land of Cainan, the land of my fathers, a land of righteousness unto this day," and commenced to deliver unto them a great discourse. Enoch succeeded by following the direction of the Almighty in building up unto the Lord many churches in the land of Shem, in the land of Heni, and in various parts of the land, the names of which are given, being commanded of the Lord to preach to all these nations that were shown to him in vision, excepting certain people that were under the curse. He was forbidden to preach to them. A skin of blackness had come upon them. They were cursed of the Lord. They were the descendants of the murderer Cain. Enoch was not permitted to preach to them, but he gathered out from the land of Heni, Shem, and various other parts, many who received the Gospel, unto a place where he built up a city that was called Zion. Now, where was that city? It is not revealed. Where was the garden of Eden? It is not revealed—that is, there is no written revelation. It may have been verbally revealed where the city of Zion stood and where the garden was, if so it has been handed down verbally without ever having been written. They were gathered together, a city was built. This was some 40 years after Enoch was called. He was called quite young, too, being only 25 years of age when he was commanded to go on this mission. After gathering together this people, it seems that the city was built, and it stood on the earth 365 years, making Enoch 430 years old when he and his city were taken from the earth. Now, I doubt about Adam's dwelling in that city. I think Adam had a dwelling place to the north of the city. What makes you think so? I think so from what is revealed in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants. In that book we read that three years before Adam died, he gathered together Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahaleel, Jared and the various heads of his posterity, and all the righteous unto a certain valley that will be found in Davis County, Missouri. There is a little hill on one side of that valley, quite a prominent place. They were gathered in that valley, perhaps they may have numbered many scores of thousands. It seems to have been a prominent conference in those days, and it must have been very encouraging indeed for Adam to see his descendants for some seven or eight generations gathered round about him. They did not hold this conference in the city of Zion, for Zion probably had already fled. We do not know whether it was on the earth at that time or not. At any rate this conference was not held in the city of Zion. The Lord appeared to the people assembled at this conference. What a great blessing! I think if they expected anything in life, if they thought they would not feel at all that

ous to go home, they would be willing to stay until the conference was closed. Well, along toward the close of this gathering Adam predicted what should come to pass down until the end of the earth among all the generations of his people, and it was considered of such great importance that they wrote it in a book which was called the Book of Enoch. In that book they recorded this prophecy in the language of Adam, a pure language, according to the pattern shown them by the Lord. What has become of that book? I have not enquired, and I do not know that any of my brethren have. It is no doubt preserved. Whether it was hid up by Methuselah, Lamech, or Noah, I do not know. Noah lived on the earth some 600 years before the flood came, and he understood all about his forefathers. The records having come into his hands I presume that he would see that they were not destroyed in the flood. He would be very apt to secure them somewhere, and as Noah lived upon this western hemisphere I presume there is a place of deposit somewhere on this land where Enoch's records are hid and where the records of Seth, Adam and all those High Priests I have been speaking of, who all wrote according to the spirit of inspiration. I presume these prophecies and records are all kept. Well, says one, have you any idea that they will ever come forth? Why, certainly. The Lord tells us—you can read it in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants—that the things that were written in the Book of Enoch concerning that great and last council are to come forth and be testified of in due time. The Lord while he was dwelling in the city of Enoch—for the Lord dwelt there, it was one of his holy places; I do not say he was there every moment, for he had many other mansions and kingdoms besides that—revealed unto the people a great many things. Enoch saw what should become of his seed, and in his enquiries he found out that his seed at some future period would be translated and taken up into heaven and he would be with them. He also found out that there was a long period of time to intervene between the translation of his city and the coming of the Messiah in the flesh and the redemption that was to be wrought out by the shedding of the blood of "the Righteous," even the Son of God. He saw the spirits of men that were shut up some of them in prison. But, says one, I thought they were all shut up in prison. No; if you take this book and read it you will find that the Lord made a distinction; He did not send them all to prison. There were certain ones that were not worthy of going to that prison; they were too wicked, too corrupt, too abominable wicked in the flesh; they were reserved in chains of darkness. How long? For a long period after those in prison should be redeemed. Enoch saw this, and he saw that when the Lamb of God was lifted up and the blood of the Righteous was shed he saw the prison doors open and as many of the spirits as were in prison—not all the spirits—but as many of them as were in prison came forth and stood on the right hand of God. What became of the other spirits that were not in prison? The others were reserved in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day. This was shown to the Prophet Enoch. By and bye he saw this same personage that was crucified arising from the dead. He saw the heavens veiled in darkness at the time of the crucifixion and the earth quaked and trembled, and after the resurrection of Christ the Saints of the Most High God came forth from the dead. All the righteous from the days of Adam down until the time of the resurrection of Jesus had the privilege of coming forth in what was then termed the first resurrection. By and bye Enoch saw that Jesus being resurrected from the dead ascended up unto his Father and God, and he felt very anxious. Says he: "Wilt thou not come again upon the earth?" And he saw in vision that the earth itself was pained and groaned under the load of sin and corruption which was upon the face thereof, and made use of the words, "When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face?" And when Enoch heard these things, he felt inexpressible sorrow for old mother earth. He looked upon the earth as a being of intelligence, a being that was capable of uttering forth words, a being that was capable of being afflicted