

THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 2.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, DECEMBER 26, 1896.

Vol. LIV.

DISCOURSE

Discourse delivered in the Tabernacle,
Salt Lake City, Monday, October 5th, 1896, by

ELDER FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I earnestly desire a measure of the Holy Spirit to assist me the few minutes that I may stand before you this morning. We have been receiving most precious instructions given to us by those who have spoken. It was brought impressively home to my mind yesterday while listening with the rest of you, the great fact that all this knowledge and all this experience in the Church of Christ, with every blessing that we have received therein and that we hope to obtain hereafter, has all come to us through the agency, the ministry and the dispensation that was given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. This great fact connected with the manner of God's dealing with this young man contributes to make our whole work seem the more wonderful, mysterious and all-powerful in our eyes. We have been singing this morning, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet, to guide us in these latter days." The character of this man became such that he has been an object of song in the assemblies of Saints in all the world where the Gospel has been preached; so that he has been spoken of as the angel said he would be—his name would be had for good and for evil in all the world. It has been, so far as the sound of him and his work has gone. There is something very strange that the Lord should take a boy fourteen years old in December; and in the early part of the next spring He began to deal with him. The boy was simple enough to believe that there was a God in heaven, and that he might inquire after Him as the Scriptures said he might. Wonderful also to contemplate, that so strange an affair occurred in the backwoods—away on the frontier. The western part of New York in those days was away out west. And that the Lord should pick up a boy that way and deal with him was a strange affair. Why did He not choose some learned man? If He had taken a learned man, he would have very soon been telling the Lord He did not know His business; and if the Lord did not hearken to his counsels, he would turn and leave him. We see plenty of those things going on in our experience. But He took a boy, and began to discipline and teach him. He showed himself to him, spoke to him, and told him that the way of the world was wrong. He sent His angels to teach him and to educate him.

The Lord tells us in the revela-

tions that the first great gift He gave to him was the gift to translate the Book of Mormon, and that He would give him no other gift until that was accomplished. Thus he brought forth to us, by the information given through Moroni to him where the record was found, the precious history of this half of the world extending through a number of centuries. This book, that has been so despised by the world, was testified to by the Prophet Joseph when asked: "How and when did you obtain the Book of Mormon? Answer. Moroni, the person who deposited the plates, from which the Book of Mormon was translated, in a hill in Manchester, Ontario County, New York, being dead and raised again therefrom, appeared unto me, and told me where they were; and gave me directions how to obtain them. I obtained them, and the Urim and Thummin with them, by the means of which I translated the plates, and thus came the Book of Mormon." It contains the simplest declaration and the best elucidation of the principles of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ of any one book extant. And why should it not be translated word by word, sentence by sentence, line by line, page by page, through the Urim and Thummin? We have no other book on earth that has such claims to our undivided confidence as the Book of Mormon.

This appeared to be the opening wedge and stepping stone to the great work of ushering in the last dispensation. The Prophet Joseph, while going on with this work, learned that there was a necessity for all people to be baptized, and when he saw that he earnestly desired the blessings as they were offered. He called on the Lord about it, and John the Baptist came and ordained him and Oliver Cowdery to the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood. This was a most wonderful thing. Now there were two men found on earth who could administer baptism by authority for the forgiveness or remission of sins. This stirred up the wrath of the ungodly till the boy was hunted, searched for, persecuted and driven from place to place. Soon after he received this blessing and power, he heard the word of the Lord unto him in the house of Father Whitmer saying that if faithful in this he should soon receive other authority by which to administer spiritual blessings. Therein he received the oracles of the Apostleship, was ordained to the Melchisedek Priesthood, with power to administer all blessings of a spiritual nature upon the people as well as those of a temporal or physical nature.

Referring to these ordinations, it is revealed in the 27th section of Doctrine and Covenants, that He will partake with Adam, Noah, Abraham and John

the Baptist, "which John I have sent unto you, my servants, Joseph Smith Jr., and Oliver Cowdery, to ordain you unto this first Priesthood which you have received, that you might be called and ordained even as Aaron."

"And also with Peter and James and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be Apostles, and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry, and of the same things which I reveal unto them.

"Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the Gospel for the last times; and for the fullness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth."

The account of this is not given us very fully as to when it occurred; but Brother Addison Everett, who died a short time ago, has left it on record that he heard the Prophet Joseph say in the Mansion House, in Nauvoo, that it was on an occasion when they were returning from Colesville in York State, to Harmony, in Pennsylvania. A numerous mob had gathered in Colesville determined to destroy him, and the only way to save his life, to all human appearance, was to leave at once, and he and Oliver Cowdery went. After travelling and wandering along on the banks of the Susquehanna, through the marshes and swamps, all night long, and having had little or nothing to eat the day before, they were weary, faint and well nigh exhausted. Oliver became so weary that Joseph had to put his arm around him to steady him while they got out on to dryer land where they could sit down and rest. When they came out into this place, this brother says, Joseph told him that it was there that Peter, James and John met them in their loneliness and weariness, and declared unto them their testimony, that they had been sent of the Lord Jesus Christ to ordain them to the Apostleship. The Prophet Joseph, in writing about the great work of the Lord in his seclusion in the days of Nauvoo, says:

"And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, and an angel from Heaven, declaring the fulfillment of the Prophets, the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book. The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light. The voice of Peter, James and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna County, and Colesville, Broome County, on the Susquehanna river, declaring