

DESERET NEWS.

WEEKLY.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE
DESERET NEWS COMPANY.

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WEDNESDAY - Nov. 24, 1886

AN EPISTLE

To the Saints Scattered Abroad, Greeting:

DEAR BRETHREN—I feel desirous to express myself upon the present condition of Zion and its inhabitants. The history which we are making as Latter-day Saints is strictly in fulfillment of the revelations of God, as given through the mouths of Prophets and inspired men to the inhabitants of the earth in every dispensation when God has had an acknowledged people on the earth. The God of heaven, who created this earth and placed His children upon it, gave unto them a law whereby they might be exalted and saved in a kingdom of glory. For there is a law given unto all kingdoms, and all things are governed by law throughout the whole universe. Whatever law anyone keeps he is preserved by that law, and he receives whatever reward that law guarantees unto him. It is the will of God that all His children should obey the highest law, that they may receive the highest glory that is ordained for all immortal beings. But God has given all His children an agency, to choose what law they will keep.

These two principles do exist, good and evil, God and the Devil. Whatever leads to good and to do good is of God. Whatever leads to evil and to do evil is of the Devil. God has labored from the creation of man to lead him to keep the celestial law, that he may inherit a celestial glory and partake of eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God to man; while the Devil, with all the fallen angels, has labored from the creation to lead man astray, to lead him down to the perdition of ungodly men, that he may have dominion over him.

These two principles have governed and controlled the acts of all the children of men, and laid the foundation for all the history of the whole world for the last six thousand years, or from the creation of man. This power of the Devil, and of all the fallen angels, who are represented to have been one-third part of all the hosts of heaven, who were cast down from heaven to earth, has been at war against God and His Christ, and against every Prophet and Apostle and inspired man whom God has raised up, from the creation of the world to the present day. The first man, Adam, under the influence of the Devil, transgressed a law by which death came into the world. God the Eternal Father gave His only begotten Son, as a great sacrifice, to shed His blood to redeem man from death. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The God of heaven, whom we worship, is represented as the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Father and Son have tabernacles, and they created man after their own image. But the Holy Ghost is a spirit and a witness and a testimony of the Father and the Son. This Holy Ghost and witness are promised unto all men who will obey the law of the Gospel, which God has revealed to the human family. This Holy Ghost rested upon Adam when he blessed his posterity in Adam-oni-Ahman, three years previous to his death.

The Lord gave unto Adam and many of his sons the Holy Priesthood, whereby they could administer in the ordinances of the Gospel of life and salvation. The Lord has raised up men in every dispensation, when He has had a people on earth, unto whom He has given the Priesthood, and all people have been blessed when they have hearkened to the voice of the Lord. On the other hand, when the inhabitants of the earth have become wicked, and have transgressed the law of God, they have been chastised, and when they have become ripened in iniquity they have been cut off from the earth, as in the case of Noah and Lot, and "as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man." The righteous were saved while the wicked were destroyed.

The whole history of the dealings of the Lord with man has shown the benefits and blessings of obeying the Lord and keeping His commandments. The history of the dealings of the Lord with ancient Israel shows that He blessed the righteous and cursed the wicked and brought His judgments upon them. Whenever Israel hearkened to the teachings of Moses and the prophets, they prospered, and their enemies were a prey unto them. But when they departed from the Lord and set up altars to Baal, and committed sin, the Lord forsook them, as in the case of Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Zedekiah the King. He forsook the Lord, and led the people astray. They were full of blood and murder and whoredom and all manner of abominations, and the Lord warned them through His Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

These Prophets told the king and the people what judgments would come upon them, and the Lord said by Ezekiel unto the king and to the people, "What I have spoken shall be done." Now all that these Prophets said came to pass. Not one jot nor tittle fell unfulfilled. The Jews put to death the Savior and the Apostles and rejected the Lord and the Gospel; and all that Moses, Jesus, the Apostles and the Prophets spoke concerning Israel, Judah and Jerusalem came to pass to the very letter.

All the Prophets and Apostles who have written since man was placed upon the earth have seen our day, and have prophesied of the events which were to take place on the earth in the last dispensation and fullness of times. They have seen the Church of God, the Zion of God, and the Kingdom of God established on the earth, and the gathering of the people from all nations to build them up, and the judgments of God which were to rest, in the last days, upon all nations who should fight against Mount Zion and the people of God. Now I wish to ask the Latter-day Saints if they can for a moment think that the Lord will fail in these days in fulfilling His promises any more than He has in other dispensations? No. He will not.

In fulfillment of His sayings through the mouths of those ancient Apostles and Prophets, the Lord has set His hand once more, for the last time, to prune His vineyard and to establish His Church and kingdom upon the earth, to be thrown down no more forever. He has raised up His Prophets and Apostles and revealed unto them the fullness of the everlasting Gospel, and given unto them the everlasting Priesthoods of Aaron and of Melchisedek. Joseph Smith was raised up by the power of God, and the administration of angels, and he brought forth the Book of Mormon, the record and stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim, as spoken of by the Prophet Ezekiel in the 37th chapter. This Prophet of God, Joseph Smith, had power to organize the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, according to the ancient order of the Church of Christ, with Apostles and Prophets, Evangelists, Bishops, Pastors and Teachers. And the Church has been led continually by living oracles and the revelations of God from heaven until the present day. It has now stood fifty-six years since its organization, and its history is before the heavens and the earth. The Prophets and Apostles and many Elders have gone forth and preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ to many nations, and tens of thousands of the inhabitants of the earth have embraced the Gospel, been baptized for the remission of their sins, have received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and have been gathered home to Zion from many nations, in fulfillment of the ancient Prophets, who spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost. Earth and hell have been combated to stop the little stone from rolling, and from becoming a mountain and filling the whole earth, as Daniel said it should in the last days. Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, with several of the Apostles and Elders and many Saints, have already sealed their testimony with their blood, and to-day prisons are crowded with the Elders of Israel for keeping the commandments of God, and many others have been driven into exile for the same cause.

Many of the inhabitants of the land are stirred up and are desirous to destroy the Church and Kingdom of God from off the earth. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His ways. The Gentile or Christian world to-day can no more commit sins, and be guilty of lying, stealing, blasphemy, whoredom, or murder, or commit any abominations, and escape the wrath of God, than could Sodom and Gomorrah, or the antediluvian world, or ancient Israel. The word of the Lord has been proclaimed against the Gentiles and all the inhabitants of the earth in the last days who commit sin, and it will as assuredly be fulfilled as in ancient days. The Lord has a controversy with this generation, and he will judge the inhabitants according to the deeds done in the body, and none can stay His hand.

I want to say to the Saints of God who dwell in the flesh to-day, that the fifty-six years which have passed away since the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, have taken into the spirit world all our Prophets, Apostles, Elders and Saints who have finished their testimony in the flesh. Their voice is hushed in death and their testimony is closed. They are mingling with the spirits of the righteous and waiting for the great day of the coming of the Son of Man, when Jesus Christ will come in the clouds of heaven to reward every man according to the deeds done in the body. But though they have passed away, is the work of God finished on the earth? Verily no. Has the warning voice ceased to be heard by the inhabitants of the earth? It has not. All of us who remain in the flesh are under as much obligation to lift the warning voice and reap while the day lasts as were those who have passed away.

The Lord said to Ezekiel, "I have made thee a watchman upon the House of Israel." "When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die."

In his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." This is precisely our condition to-day. As Apostles, Seventies, High Priests and Elders, we and all men who bear any portion of the Holy Priesthood, are watchmen upon the walls of Zion and messengers to all the inhabitants of the earth, and all of us will be held responsible if we do not improve our time and lift the warning voice, as far as we have opportunity, and warn this generation of the judgments of God which await them.

I know the judgments of God are very nigh unto the door of this nation, and this generation, and they will overtake the world before it is prepared for that time. Even the coming of the Son of Man is nigh, and he will come as a thief in the night. Who is prepared to abide the day of His coming? It is our duty to labor and reap. Then every man should be diligent in that sphere in which he is called to act, that his garments may be clean from the blood of all men.

I do not believe there was ever a generation of men who inhabited the earth who were more wicked, or who were practising greater abominations, or who were sinning against greater light and knowledge, or who had a greater flood of judgments proclaimed against them by the word of the Lord, than the generation in which we live. Therefore, as Saints of the living God, who bear the Holy Priesthood, we shall be under condemnation if we do not lift up the warning voice against the evils and abominations which exist, so far as we have opportunity. How many woes the Prophets and Apostles have proclaimed against those who fight against Zion. "Woe unto all those who discomfort my people, and drive and murder them, and testify against them, saith the Lord of hosts. A generation of vipers shall not escape the damnation of hell. Behold, mine eyes see and know all their works, and I have in reserve a swift judgment, in the season thereof, for them all. For there is a time appointed for every man, according as his work shall be."

I will say to the Apostles, our responsibility is very great. The Prophets who organized the Church and laid the foundation of this last dispensation, with a whole quorum of Apostles, have finished their testimony and gone into the spirit world. We have been called to take their places. What manner of men ought we to be? The whole earth is ripening in iniquity, and the Zion of God should be prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. We should humble ourselves before the Lord and be in a position to be filled with the spirit of our calling, with the Holy Ghost, and with the revelations of Jesus Christ, that we may know the mind and will of God concerning us, and be prepared to magnify our calling and bring to pass righteousness, and be valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ to the end of our pilgrimage, here in the flesh. The Prophets, Apostles, and all the heavenly hosts are watching over us. There never was a time when the work of God required a more faithful testimony and labor from the Apostles and Elders than to-day.

I would say to the Seventies, who stand connected with the quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as messengers to the nations of the earth, it has fallen to your lot to go forth and assist to prune the vineyard once more, and for the last time, before the coming of the Son of Man. The Lord said, fifty-seven years ago, that the field was white for the harvest, and He had set His hand to prune the vineyard once more, and for the last time. The Elders were commanded at that day to thrust in their sickle and reap while it was called to-day, for soon night would come, when no man could reap. Brethren, it is much nearer night now than it was fifty-seven years ago. The Savior said at that day, that the angels were crying day and night for the privilege to go forth and reap down the earth. He informed them they must wait a little season until the harvest was fully ripe. The nations must be warned, Zion must be established, and the wheat, or the saints, be gathered into the garner, then the angels might go forth and reap the tares, gather them in bundles and prepare them for the burning.

Since that day many thousands of the saints have been gathered to Zion from the nations of the earth. But you are called upon at this late day to still go forth and warn the Gentiles with the proclamation of the Gospel. Therefore, brethren, you who are called to go into the vineyard, whether Apostles, High Priests, Seventies, or Elders, do not be weary in well doing. Remember, you are messengers of salvation. Keep yourselves pure and spotless before God and all men. Seek to bring to pass righteousness, and save the souls of men. Labor faithfully that your garments may be clean from the blood of all men, and that the nations may be left without excuse in the day of God's judgments upon the wicked, which is nigh at hand, and those judgments will be poured out without measure.

All the messengers in the vineyard should be righteous and holy men, and call upon the Lord in mighty prayer, in order to prevail. It is the privilege of every Elder in Israel, who is laboring in the vineyard, if he will live up to his privileges, to have dreams, visions, and revelations, and the Holy Ghost as a constant companion, that he may be able thoroughly to gather out the blood of Israel and the meek of the earth and bring them into the fold of Christ.

It is true that the Elders who are called to bear record of the Gospel of Christ to the nations of the earth are

many times called to pass through persecution for the Gospel's sake, and in some instances to lay down their lives, as did the ancient saints, and quite a number in our day, for Christ's sake. But there seems to be a special crown of glory laid up for every man who is martyred for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. No matter in what age of the world he lays down his life for Christ's sake, he will find it again, and eternal life in the world to come. Therefore, brethren, let us be diligent in our labors in this last hour in the vineyard. The Lord said to Oliver Cowdery, if he labored all the days of his life and saved but one soul, how great would be his joy in the kingdom of heaven with that one soul. We have everything to encourage us in our labors in the vineyard of the Lord.

While this labor is going on among the nations of the earth, there is a great labor and responsibility resting upon the whole ministry who dwell in Zion. There is labor sufficient for every man who bears any portion of the Holy Priesthood, in the various capacities in which the brethren are called to act. The High Priests, whose calling is to preside, are called upon to officiate in Zion as High Councilors, Presidents of Stakes and Counselors, Bishops and Counselors, Superintendents of Sabbath schools and mutual improvement associations. In every capacity in which they are called to act, they have an immense field in which to improve their talents and magnify their calling. Here is where the High Priests are mainly called to preside, officiate and labor.

There never was a time when the Holy Priesthood, in its various branches, offices and labors, had a greater work to perform, than in our day. The searching out of iniquity, the purifying, sanctifying, and cleansing of the people, the uniting of the Saints and the general perfecting of Zion rest upon the brethren and the Holy Priesthood who dwell in Zion.

The whole Church, both priest and people, should give diligent heed to the late Epistle of the First Presidency, which has been published to the world. The counsel they have given upon the various items they have referred to should be strictly carried out. The breaking of the Sabbath day, and pleasure excursions upon that day should not be indulged in by the Latter-day Saints. The Presidents of Stakes and their Counselors, the Bishops and their Counselors, whose immediate duty it is to watch over the stakes and wards, have a great responsibility and duty to perform. Iniquity must be sought out. Zion cannot prosper when sin and iniquity are permitted to dwell in her midst.

One of the most important and responsible fields of labor in Zion is that committed to the care of those who preside over and teach in the primaries, Sabbath schools, and improvement associations, and those who are teaching private day schools among the Latter-day Saints. Who can comprehend the result of the labor performed by the Elders of Israel in these branches? No man, unless filled with the revelations of heaven and the inspiration of Almighty God. We send out hundreds of Elders, who go to the nations of the earth to preach the Gospel of Christ. After spending two or three years, as missionaries, if they have converted a dozen souls and brought them into the church, they think they have done a good work, which they certainly have. But here, the Elders who are presiding over and teaching in these institutions in Zion, filled with the children of the Latter-day Saints, have an army of immortal souls before them to guide and teach, and to direct their minds, that they may be qualified to step forth and take hold of the Church and kingdom of God and build it up and bear it off triumphantly, after their fathers and elders are laid in the tomb. O what a mission is given to the sons of Ephraim, the Elders of Israel, the Latter-day Saints! To warn the whole world of the judgments which are to come, preach the Gospel to all people, gather the saints from all nations, build up Zion, and prepare for the coming of the Son of Man, standing in holy places, while judgments waste the wicked.

There is one admonition of our Savior that all the Saints of God should observe, but which, I fear, we do not as we should, and that is, to pray always and faint not. I fear, as a people, we do not pray enough, in faith. We should call upon the Lord in mighty prayer, and make all our wants known unto Him. For if He does not protect and deliver us and save us, no other power will. Therefore our trust is entirely in Him. Therefore our prayers should ascend into the ears of our heavenly Father day and night.

I want to say a few words to our brethren who are in prison, or under bonds, or driven into exile for our religion, or for keeping the commandments of God. You should not think that any strange thing has happened unto you. Persecution is a legacy that has been handed down from father Adam to our day. It was said of old that all men who lived godly in Christ Jesus should suffer persecution. If we meet with no persecution in our day, we shall hardly feel at home when we go into the spirit world and meet with the ancient prophets and with Christ and the Apostles, who passed through much persecution and tribulation. Many of them were crucified or otherwise put to death. They sealed their testimony with their own blood, as was the case with Joseph and Hyrum and several of the Apostles, Elders and Saints in our day.

As Elders of Israel, while we are passing through these afflictions, let us not cherish revenge or hatred in our hearts towards our persecutors. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Jesus Christ, the Son of God, when nailed to the cross, and while in the agony of death, cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Why did He say this to His Father in heaven? Because the Son of God knew full well what would be the result of His death upon the heads of His murderers. He knew what awaited the whole Jewish nation, when that people said, "Let His blood be on us, and on our children." He fully comprehended the great suffering that awaited the Jews and their posterity, for the next eighteen hundred years. He knew that all that Moses and the Prophets, as well as what He had spoken Himself, against the Jewish nation, would come to pass; for God had spoken it through them, and His words never fail.

No infidel on earth can deny the fact that Jerusalem was overthrown, the foundation of the Temple dug up and not one stone left upon another. The Jews fell by famine, by pestilence, and by the sword, until twelve hundred thousand dead bodies were carried through the gates outside of the walls of Jerusalem during the distress of the siege under Titus, and a remnant was taken captive and scattered throughout the world among the Gentile nations, and the Jews have been a hiss and a by-word, and have been trampled under the feet of the Gentiles until the present day, and the end is not yet, the yoke is not yet broken from off their necks.

All this has come to pass in fulfillment of the word of God to the Jewish nation. So I say to all my brethren who are in exile, or in prison, for the Gospel's sake, or for keeping the commandments of God, do not harbor any vengeance or hatred against this nation, or against those who have aided or abetted in your sufferings, but rather go before the Lord and pray that He will soften the hearts of the rulers of the nation, that they will give unto the Latter-day Saints the same rights and privileges in the worshiping of God according to the dictates of their own consciences as are guaranteed by the Constitution of our government, which was given by the inspiration of the God of heaven for a wise purpose in Himself.

If I am asked why I make this request of my brethren, I answer, for the same reason that Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." For as the God of heaven fulfilled all His words which He spoke concerning Judah and Jerusalem, so will He fulfill all that He has spoken concerning the Gentiles and all the nations of the earth in the last days.

I will here say, as truly as the God of heaven lives, and has established His throne on high, just so truly will He bring to pass the fulfillment of His words. He will pour out that flood of judgments upon our nation and upon all the nations of the earth, which has been proclaimed by every inspired man since the world began. The seals will be opened, the plagues poured out, and Great Babylon will fall. This generation has been warned for the last fifty years by inspired and righteous men, and after their testimony will come the testimony of thundering, of lightning, of floods, of earthquakes, and of pestilence, and famine, and war, and the flames of devouring fire, for by fire and by sword will the Lord plead with all flesh and the slain of the Lord will be many. For the Lord has said, "My sword is bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon Idumea, or the world; and who is able to stand?"

No power on earth can stay the hand of God in this work. The God of heaven will teach this nation and all other nations on earth, that He is stronger than man. He pays no regard to nations or numbers in the fulfillment of His purposes, for He holds in His hands the destiny of all men and nations, and no power beneath the heavens can hinder His work. The God of Israel has set His hand to gather His people from all nations and build up His Church and establish Zion in all that beauty, power, and glory which Isaiah and other Prophets saw, and to build up His kingdom, which shall fill the whole earth, and in which Jesus of Nazareth will establish His throne and sit thereon, and reign over the earth for one thousand years, as the Prophet Daniel and other Prophets have declared. And it will come to pass in spite of earth and hell and all the unbelief of the whole Christian Gentile world. If our nation or the Gentiles do not believe this, let them wait and see, and they will not have to wait long before they will see the signs manifest of the beginning of these things. So far as the Saints are concerned, the Spirit of God will bear record to their spirits as they read these testimonies, of their truth.

I will close by quoting the testimony of Ezekiel in the 24th chapter, 14th verse—"I the Lord have spoken it; it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God."

WILFORD WOODRUFF.

October 26, 1886.

Conrad Kohrs, of Deer Lodge County, last week sold 213 fat steers in Chicago, at \$3.40 per cwt.