

RELIGIOUS.

Sunday Services.

Religious services were held at the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, April 10, 1892, commencing at 2 p.m., President Angus M. Cannon presiding.

The services commenced by the choir singing the hymn commencing:

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.

Prayer by Elder David H. Cannon.
The choir sang:

Jesus, once of humble birth,
Now in glory comes to earth.

The Priesthood of the Seventh ward officiated in the administering of the Sacrament.

BISHOP ORSON F. WHITNEY

then addressed the congregation. He was perfectly sincere, he said, in the statement that he would have been as well pleased if the lot had fallen to some one else to address the assembly this afternoon. He had seen times when to speak on such occasions had been a great pleasure, and he hoped he would feel the same before the services were over. At present, however, he was somewhat ailing in body and more or less indisposed to occupy that position. But he responded to the call made upon him in the hope that weakness would give way to strength and that he by the power of the Spirit might be able to say something profitable.

The speaker had been a happy and an interested auditor during the Conference just closed, and rejoiced in the Lord that he had been permitted to see this day, to witness the imposing ceremonies attending the laying of the capstone on the Temple. The proceedings of the late general Conference were among the most enjoyable he had ever experienced. In viewing the vast congregations that had assembled here during those proceedings he could not but contrast the work of God as seen to-day with the past history of his people—contrasting the Then and the Now, the small beginning with the present achievement. In so doing we can realize to some extent the truth of the prediction of sixty years ago: "Behold a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men."

It is now about seventy-two years since the Prophet Joseph Smith, then a boy about fourteen years of age, felt inspired to seek the Lord in prayer and obtain from Him a testimony concerning the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. It was on just such a bright spring morning as that which dawned today that he went out into the woods and inquired of the Lord which of all the churches then existing was the true one. He was born in a land of churches and Bibles. He was surrounded by sects, each claiming to be the true church of Christ, and it had never dawned upon him but that one of them was indeed right. But which this was, he did not know. Reading in the Epistle of James that "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally," he determined to put the word to the test, and so sought the Lord, beseeching Him to hear and answer his prayer. He testifies that at this his first at-

tempt to pray orally, he was seized by a mysterious power which paralyzed his tongue and threatened him with destruction, but he continued to pray in his thoughts and just as he seemed about to give way to the antagonizing influence that had seized him he saw a light descending from heaven which delivered him from his foe. In the midst of the luminous pillar there appeared two personages, one of whom pointing to the other, said: "This is my beloved Son; hear him."

This was in itself a strange revelation to the boy. The Scriptures teach that man was created in God's image. Jesus told His disciples that those who had seen Him had seen the Father. Paul says Christ was the express image of the Father's person. But notwithstanding these testimonies, the world had forgotten the fact that God is a person, and they had conjured up a God without body, parts or passions. They had no definite idea of Deity. They could describe him no better than by saying He

Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glowes in the stars, and blossoms in the trees.

This was the prevailing idea of God when Joseph Smith prayed for enlightenment. Now, the Prophet testifies that the glorious Beings who answered his prayer were in the form of men, and this was doubtless a new revelation to him, after having heard all his life that God was a being without personality.

He testifies that he was told all the churches had gone astray. There had been a universal apostasy, doctrines of men having been substituted for the pure word of the Lord. The people honored God with their lips, while their hearts were far from Him. He was therefore instructed not to join any of the existing churches. The heavenly visitants then withdrew.

This took place in the spring of the year 1820. Three years later, Moroni, a holy angel, whose representative figure now surmounts the capstone of the Temple, visited him and proclaimed himself a messenger from the presence of the Lord. He said he was the last of a line of prophets who had ministered to the Nephites, an ancient people who inhabited this continent. He showed Joseph where there were records—golden plates—hidden, giving an account of the dealings of the Almighty with these ancient people. With the records were deposited an instrument called the Urim and Thummim, by the aid of which the plates could be translated. Joseph was told that God was about to begin a great work necessary to prepare the world for the glorious coming of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom which should never be thrown down. He was afterwards enabled to obtain the plates from the hill Cumorah, this being the name anciently given to the hill, where Moroni, the last survivor of the great battle in which the Nephites were destroyed, had deposited the sacred records. This happened about the year 385 A. D.

Joseph obtained and translated the plates, which translation is now known as the Book of Mormon, a history of the house of Joseph and the dealings of God with them, similar to His dealings with Israel in the Orient.

Angels again visited the youthful Prophet and conferred upon him the

Priesthood. The Aaronic Priesthood was conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist, who ordained them in the following words: "Upon you, my servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the Gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness." This event took place on May 15, 1829, while Joseph was engaged in translating the Nephite record. By virtue of this ordination they had power to preach the gospel of faith and repentance, and baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, but they had not the authority to lay on hands and bestow the Holy Ghost. To give this power another Priesthood, the Melchisedek, should in due time, they were told, be conferred upon them. This was given to them when the time came, under the hands of Peter, James and John, who held the keys of this Priesthood.

As soon as they had received the Aaronic Priesthood, Joseph and Oliver were told to baptize each other by immersion, this being the only true mode of baptism, typifying the burial and resurrection of Christ, the Redeemer. They were given to understand that sprinkling or pouring water upon the head, or the baptism of infants were rites unauthorized of God. Joseph and Oliver therefore baptized each other by immersion, after having received authority from God to do so.

On the 6th of April, 1830, these two men and a few others met in the house of Peter Whitmer at Fayette, Seneca county, New York, and organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Six members participated in the organization. Many have had an impression that the total number of Saints at that time was only six. But there had been probably seventy-five persons baptized by Joseph and Oliver prior to the formal organization of the Church. It was in order to comply with the law of the State of New York, which required at least six members to incorporate a religious society, that this number participated, but there were others present at the meeting to whom the matter was presented, who consented to the organization and declared themselves willing to receive Joseph and Oliver as their spiritual teachers. This fact should be a sufficient reply to those who imagine that "Mormonism" is a system of coercion, that the Priesthood indulge in high-handed procedure, regardless of the rights of the people. From the first the doctrine of common consent has prevailed with the Latter-day Saints.

The Book of Mormon was now published and scattered abroad. The work of God progressed. At the close of the year, the Church was commanded by revelation to move westward, to the State of Ohio. One hundred and twenty-seven souls had been baptized there by certain Elders who had gone westward on a mission to the Indians, or as the Book of Mormon styles them, Lamanites. These Elders had then proceeded on to Jackson County, Missouri. The Church