

RELIGIOUS.

Sunday Services.

Religious services were held in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, September 13, 1890, commencing at 2 p. m. Counselor Charles W. Penrose presiding.

The choir sang:

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God.

Prayer was offered by Elder David F. Davis.

The choir sang:

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

The Priesthood of the Seventeenth Ward officiated in the administration of the Sacrament.

ELDER J. M. SJODAHL

was then called to address the congregation. He said: It seems to have fallen to my lot this afternoon to occupy a portion of the time allotted to our service. While at tempting to speak to you I most earnestly desire to have an interest in your faith and prayers so that I may be able to say something that will be of interest and possibly benefit us. I realize that it is impossible to speak to advantage without the aid of the Holy Spirit.

I have had the privilege, not very long ago, of visiting the Holy Land, Palestine, and the presiding brethren here have suggested that I relate some of my experience and observations while there.

First of all I desire to bear my testimony to the truth of the gospel revealed through Joseph Smith. I received great and additional testimony of this truth while traveling in that far off country. Most of you, no doubt, will remember that many years ago, one of the Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was sent on a mission to the Holy Land. He went there to dedicate that land for the gathering of the Jews; that it might again become fruitful, and be fit to receive the ancient people of God. At that time, 1840, when Apostle Orson Hyde went on this mission to Palestine there were not many divines in the Christian world who even thought that Palestine could be a gathering place for the Jews. If they read the Scriptures about a gathering that was to take place in the last days, they said it was to be understood of a "spiritual" gathering. So with the building of the Temple. It was to be a "spiritual" building. No one ventured to look upon these events in any other light. At such a time the Apostle Orson Hyde was sent out to dedicate that land for the gathering of the Jews, and as I walked about through the land from the north to the south I had many opportunities to notice the effect of this dedication. The Jews are now gathering to their land in great numbers. Hardly a steamer arrives in Jaffa, that does not bring some Jewish families who come to settle in the beloved land of their fathers. The God of heaven has indeed heard

the prayers of Apostle Orson Hyde in regard to that land. It is a standing witness and testimony to the nations that God Himself has set His seal upon what was done by His servant, who went thither by the direction of His Spirit. Brother Hyde did not go there led by human wisdom: the divines of the world gave him no clue to that work. The learned men of the world never dreamed of dedicating the chosen land for the gathering of scattered Israel, or contemplated the magnitude and grandeur of the work that was shortly to take place. It required a revelation and command from God to perform the work that was necessary for the return of the despised people. The Lord of Hosts directed what was to be done and He has now proved that Apostle Hyde went forth as an Apostle of God by the fact that from that very time the gathering spoken of by ancient and modern prophets took place.

The physical aspect of the country has also changed since then. Formerly there was a noted scarcity of rain, so much so that the country could sustain but few inhabitants. This has now all been changed.

The early and late rains spoken of by the authors of the Bible as one of the blessings of the land now come regularly. Every year, about the middle of September, it commences to rain. At first it is mild, gentle showers, but it increases gradually, and in December and January and part of February it rains almost incessantly. In April or the beginning of May the crops have been brought to perfection on the ground and are ready for harvesting. The land is very fertile, through the blessings of God.

Where there is only a handful of soil between the rocks it yields abundantly. I have no doubt, although the country is very small in size, that through the blessings of the Lord, which are being made manifest to a large degree, it would be able to sustain the same amount of population which it sustained at the time of David and Solomon, something like five million of people.

The prevailing religion at the present time is of course the Mohammedan. The Turks and most of the Arabs believe in the doctrines taught by Mohammed. They are seemingly a very religiously inclined people. They devote a large portion of their time to worship.

It is not an uncommon thing to see them praying in the streets. Five times of prayer every day is the rule for those who want to observe their religion. They will spread their garments on the ground, fall down on their knees and repeat the formulas prescribed by the Koran. They wash themselves regularly, and are very particular about their ablutions. They have a very good code of morals as far as they go. But there is one peculiarity about it. The Koran tries to enumerate a specified set of morals instead of stating the principles that underlie morality. If we, for instance, want to know what is right or wrong in any par-

ticular instance, where one man has to deal with another, the bible may not have any passage meeting the requirements of that particular case, but it gives a principle: "Love thy neighbor as thyself," covering in that one passage all possible cases. The Islam not so. In the Koran we find the virtues and the vices specified. Injustice, pride, lying, avarice, etc., are set down as sins, and kindness, justice, honesty, etc., given as virtues. But then there is also this about it, that the Mohammedans do not consider themselves under any obligations to those that do not belong to their faith. They, themselves are the faithful ones, while all outsiders are "infidels and dogs." This gives a fair clue to the right understanding of many of the characteristics of the Orientals.

The most prominent religion in Palestine, next to the Mohammedan, is the Catholic—represented by the two divisions, the Roman and the Greek Church. They occupy prominent places, supposed to be sacred ground. Pilgrims by the hundreds and thousands, principally from Russia and other Catholic countries gather to Jerusalem at a certain time every year to offer their devotions to God and receive special favors from him. The places they meet in are alleged to be the spot where Jesus was crucified and buried, but as to this no one knows for certain. On their arrival they enter the gilded edifice erected over the supposed sepulchre. Various sacred spots are here pointed out and devotionally revered by the masses that assemble for worship.

One of the most degrading practices, attended with great bodily injury and even death in many instances, is annually witnessed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—an imitation of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. The pilgrims celebrate this occasion, and so eager are they to get a portion of the fire as it descends, as they think, from heaven, that some of their number sometimes get crushed to death in the wild and mad panic that prevails. It is a most shocking sight to witness the scenes that exist on these occasions. The priest enters the little church and is soon followed by the multitude of enthusiastic people. He enters the grave all by himself. Through four small holes in the walls the fire soon appears. This is the signal for the pilgrims, who are provided with torches, to make a mad rush, in order to get a light from the "holy flame" to carry to their friends as a token of their devotion.

Turkish soldiers are set to watch and maintain order, but are not always able to do so on account of the panic that exist by those attempting to get the spark of the fire.

The Arab population of Palestine are a progressive race, but cautious to believe anything new or unheard of. Some of them had not even heard of America or knew that such a place existed, and went so far as to ask where it was and whether it was a big country or not, the kind of peo-