

DISCOURSE BY ELDER ORSON PRATT,

DELIVERED

In the 14th Ward Assembly Rooms,
Salt Lake City, Sunday After-
noon, February 28th, 1875.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

I WILL read a passage with which the Latter-day Saints, especially, are familiar—"All ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet hear ye." This is the third verse of the 18th chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah.

All people who have any confidence in the Old and New Testaments, and who have read the pages of the Bible are expecting certain great and important events to transpire upon the earth; they look for an entire change to come over the nations, and also for a universal kingdom to be established on the earth never to be overthrown. These things are so clearly predicted in the prophecies of the holy prophets that I believe all who profess any faith in the Bible are looking for something of this kind to take place.

All who believe in the New Testament believe that the Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is to come, not as he did formerly, in a meek and lowly manner, born in a manger, hated, derided, buffeted and spit upon and finally crucified by the hands of wicked men, but that when he comes again, it will be in very great majesty and glory, accompanied by all the armies of heaven and by the Saints of all dispensations, who will be raised from the dead at that important time, and who will be caught up into the clouds and come with him. All people who believe in the New Testament believe that such an event as this has got to transpire. Those who believe in the Old Testament, and discard the New, believe that there has to be a great change come over the inhabitants of the earth and over the whole of this creation. The Old Testament speaks of the day of the Lord, when the sun will be darkened, when the moon and the stars will refuse to shine, when the Lord will punish the wicked for their wickedness, when sinners will be swept from the face of the earth, and when there will be none but the righteous left. It is believed that a day will come, when the wicked among the inhabitants of this globe will be burned as stubble, and when there will be neither root nor branch left of the proud and of them that do wickedly. So that believers in both the Old and New Testaments, or in either of them, are expecting that such a great and terrible event will come. But very few, however, of the inhabitants of our globe have taken into consideration the great preparatory work for this grand change; they have not searched the Scriptures in regard to how this work is to be accomplished, and who the persons will be who will be ready and prepared to abide the day; how that great change will come and what the signs of it will be they know not, and yet the Bible is very plain and full in relation to these matters.

The words of our text communicate to us the knowledge that a proclamation is to become so conspicuous at that day that all the inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth will be required to see and understand, when the Lord commences this work, when he lifts up an ensign on the mountains. I suppose that a great many have been looking for the Lord to do something, but in what portion of our globe he would commence his work they did not know. There are some few, who have searched the Bible diligently, who have been looking for the kingdom of God to be set up on the earth in the latter times, never to be destroyed. Some have supposed that the kingdom that was built up by the early Christians, some eighteen hundred years ago, was that kingdom predicted by the Prophet Daniel. Others, not being able to reconcile the ideas communicated by Daniel on this subject, have looked forward to a day when there should be, literally, a kingdom established on this earth by the power of God in fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel. Those who have believed, or tried to believe, that the ancient Christians constituted that kingdom, have been at a loss as to how it could exist broken

up into a thousand fragments, a thousand different classes of people with as many different faiths clashing one with another. They have said in their hearts—"Is this the Kingdom of God, where there is no union?" Some two hundred millions of the human family professing Christianity, and yet contending one with another about their doctrines and principles, one believing a doctrine and another condemning that doctrine and believing something directly different. Another discarding both these doctrines and believing in something else, and so on, until inextricable confusion is the result. They have looked upon the babel thus created as something so different from the nature of that kingdom predicted by the ancient prophets that they have been unable to reconcile the idea in their own minds that it could possibly be the kingdom of God.

Suppose that we quote the passage in the second chapter of Daniel, in regard to the setting up of God's kingdom. It is there said that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had a dream, which portrayed before him all the kingdoms of the earth for many generations, under the similitude of a great image, whose head was of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of potter's clay. Besides the image he, in his dream, beheld something entirely distinct therefrom, and forming no part nor portion of it, cut out of the mountains without hands. It was called a stone from the mountains, which smote this great image, representing the kingdoms of the world, upon the feet, and when the feet were smitten all the other kingdoms crumbled to pieces, and they were carried away before the force of this little stone like the chaff of the summer threshing floor, and no place could be found for them; but the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Now, ancient Christianity, or in other words, the kingdom which God set up eighteen hundred years ago, did not accomplish the prediction or fulfill that which was spoken by Daniel; neither was that kingdom which was then set up at a time when this great image had been completed. No feet nor toes of the image were yet formed when the ancient kingdom of God was set up on the earth. It is true that Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonish kingdom over which he ruled, representing the head of gold, had existed. The Medes and Persians, who succeeded him, had existed, and they represented the breast and arms of silver; the Macedonians or Grecians existed, representing the third kingdom that bore rule over all the earth; the great Roman empire had begun to exist, but it was not yet divided in its two legs of iron as it was several centuries after Christ. The feet and toes of the image were not yet formed, but it will be noticed, by the testimony of Daniel, that when that stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, that is, without the hand of human wisdom; when that should be cut out and should commence its rolling forth from the mountain, the very first attack that it should make would be on the feet and toes of the image.

The ancient kingdom of God could not do this, for the reason that the feet and toes on the two legs of iron were not yet in existence, and hence that kingdom did not represent the one that Daniel spoke of, though the kingdom then set up was the kingdom of God, but not the one that was to bear rule over all the earth, as predicted.

Another reason why that kingdom was not the one spoken of by Daniel is this—the kingdom spoken of by the ancient prophet, that was to be set up by the God of heaven, was never to be destroyed, but it should break in pieces all other kingdoms and should stand for ever, and never be left to another people. Did the kingdom commenced by Christ and his apostles fulfill these predictions? No. Why not? Because it was predicted both by Daniel and by John the Revelator that the kingdom which was to be built up in the days of Christ's first coming, instead of prevailing against the kingdoms of the world, was to be overcome. It was written concerning that kingdom that war should be made upon it by the powers of this world, and that they should prevail and overcome it. Not so with the latter-day kingdom—that never can be overcome or prevailed against.

Was the prophecy of John and Daniel, concerning the former day kingdom being overcome, fulfilled? Yes. Certain powers arose and made war upon that kingdom, and spread forth their doctrines and principles until all nations became drunk with the wine of the wrath of the fornication of that great ecclesiastical power. Instead, then, of the kingdom of God overcoming the nations, it was overcome and banished from the earth.

Perhaps some may enquire—"Do you believe, then, that the Christian church has been so overcome that it has not existed on the earth?" That is what we believe, that is one of the principles taught by this people during the last forty-four years of the existence of this church. Says one—"You have no charity." Yes, we have charity just as far as the Lord God permits us to have charity; but we have not charity sufficient to call darkness light, nor the doctrines and creeds of men the doctrines of heaven. We have not charity sufficient to say that that which is organized by human wisdom is of God, or that the traditions and commandments of men can be substituted for those of God. Charity does not lead us to make these assertions. Perhaps you may enquire—"What evidence have you then, that the kingdom of God was overcome, besides the predictions that you have quoted?" We have this evidence—in the kingdom of God there were always inspired apostles. There is no testimony in this sacred volume, the New Testament, that the kingdom of God ever existed without apostles in it. Where are your apostles inspired of God, modern Christendom? Where have they been for the last seventeen centuries of the Christian era? If you had had apostles during that time they would have continued to exercise the functions and gifts of apostles: they would have received revelation from heaven, and those revelations would have been just as sacred as the revelations that were given to the first twelve apostles, and it would have been just as necessary to have them compiled in the sacred canon as to compile the revelations of those who lived in the first century of the Christian era. This, then, is a testimony and a very important one too, that the kingdom that was set up anciently did not continue, but was overcome, so much so that apostles had no existence on the earth, and they have not had for many long centuries of darkness that are passed and gone.

Recollect now, that in the New Testament order of things, given for the organization of the true Christian church, Paul says—"God hath set in the church first, apostles, secondarily prophets," &c. Take away, then, this first officer of the church, and say that no apostles are needed to inquire of God and receive revelations, and you do away with the foremost and most essential member in the kingdom of God from what you call the Christian church. "Secondarily prophets." Who does not know that for seventeen centuries past the Christian world so-called has not believed in any prophecy, that is the foretelling of future events, or in inspiration from heaven? Who does not know that all new revelation has been discarded, not only by the great mother church, called the Roman Catholic, but by the Greek Catholics, and also by all her descendants, her daughters, the various Protestant sects? They have all denounced everything in the shape of new revelation. But the kingdom or church of God never did, and it never can, exist without inspiration and new revelation, without inspired apostles and prophets; therefore this, besides the predictions that I have named, proves to every person who believes in the sacred text that the kingdom of God has not been upon the earth for a long period of time.

We might go on and show other reasons why it has not been upon the earth. In order for the kingdom of God to be upon the earth there must be a continuation of authority. Says one—"Authority for what?" Authority to administer its ordinances. Where that authority ceases the sacrament can not be administered; where that authority ceases no person can administer baptism, or the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. In fact, where that authority ceases all the ordinances of the kingdom of God cease. Says one—"Have they not had the Christian ministry among the Roman Catholics, among the

Greek Catholics, and among all the Protestants who have dissented from those two ancient churches?" Yes, they have had a ministry, but has that ministry had divine authority? That is the great question to be determined. If they have had divine authority, then the kingdom of God has existed on the earth just as long as that authority has existed; if they have not had divine authority, the kingdom of God upon the earth ceased when that authority ceased. How are we to determine this? Says one—"Determine it by the standard, the holy Scriptures." In appealing to them we find that Paul says—"No man taketh this honor unto himself, save he be called of God as was Aaron." Every person who has read the Old Testament Scriptures, knows that Aaron was called by immediate and direct revelation in his day. He was not called by revelation that was given several hundred years before he was born, to Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob; he was not called by some commission that was given in former generations, but by direct revelation in his day. Can no person, then, take this ministry to himself, unless he is called the same as Aaron was called? So says Paul. Have any of these ministers, among all these so-called Christian denominations, been called by new revelation? If they have they deny their own words, for they have incorporated in their disciplines, creeds and articles of faith that the sixty-six books contained in the Old and New Testament are all the revelations that God has ever given to man. Is that so? Let us search these sixty-six books and see if any man that lived in the second century of the Christian era is mentioned therein, or in the third or fourth, or in any succeeding century down to this day. Has any man in the Christian world from the days of the ancient apostles down to this time been called by name to the ministry? If so, that will alter the case. But I find that this ancient compilation of revelations does not mention by name a solitary individual who has dwelt on the earth for the last seventeen hundred years, hence none of them have been called by ancient revelation; and, in order to be called, according to the declaration of Paul, as Aaron was, they must be called by new revelation.

Says one—"Stop, that will not do, the very moment that we admit new revelation, we say that the canon of Scripture is not full, and that will lead us right in opposition to all the declarations and traditions of our fathers, therefore we will not take that ground, and we will not say that we have been called by new revelation as Aaron was." How will you get around it, then? Says one—"I think that we can get authority from this good old book, though our names are not mentioned therein as being called, as Aaron was, by direct revelation." Well, let us examine. What authority do you think you can get from this ancient record? Says one—"You turn to the last chapter of Mark. It is there written that Jesus said unto his eleven disciples, after he rose from the dead—'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'—Indeed! Does that call you? Did it call Paul, Timothy or Titus? Did it call any other person that lived even then, except the eleven to whom Jesus spoke? No, it did not; every other person who received any call had to receive it by new revelation. Even then, in that age, a commission given to eleven men did not commission the twelfth. A commission given to those eleven men did not commission any Christian minister who lived in the first century of the Christian era. Hence we find in the 13th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that here were certain prophets in the Christian church at Antioch—do not be astonished, professed Christians, that there were prophets in the Christian church at Antioch—"And the Holy Ghost said unto them,"—prepare yourselves for hearing a new revelation—"separate unto me Barnabas and Saul unto the work of the ministry to which I have called them." Here then was a new revelation for Barnabas and Saul in relation to their ministry and calling. But could they undertake their ministry by virtue of some old commission given prior to their calling? No. Timothy, who lived contemporary with the ancient apostles, was not called by virtue of a commission given to the eleven, neither was he called by virtue of a commission

given to Paul and Barnabas; he was called as the apostle Paul has declared in his epistle to Timothy—"Neglect not the gift which is in thee, which was given thee by the spirit of prophecy, and the laying on of the hands of the prophets." What! Did Timothy live in the day of prophets, and when prophets could find out in relation to his calling, and lay their hands upon him and set him apart to the work of the ministry unto which God had called him? Yes, and so with the rest, and no man can take the honor to himself, save he be called of God as was Aaron.

God is a very consistent being; does not do things at haphazard, but he is very orderly in his work, and everything in his kingdom is consistent and according to law. That is the way the Lord works. He is far more consistent than political governments of our day, and even they, with all their imperfections, would never be so wise as to receive a foreign minister simply because some other foreign minister had been called. Supposing that a man from Great Britain should go to Washington, and should declare to the President of the United States and to the various authorities of the government there—"I am a minister plenipotentiary, I have authority from the British government to transact whatever business it may have to transact with the government of the United States." "Very well," say the President and those associated with him at the head of government, "let us see your credentials." "My credentials!" says this man. "Bless you, I have a new commission. The authorities of Great Britain have not anything to me about being sent to represent them in the United States, but nevertheless I have authority to act as their minister." "Well, what is the nature of your authority? pray tell us." "Well," says he, "having access to some documents I found, in search of them over, that there was a commission called about fifty or sixty years ago to act in this nation as minister plenipotentiary for Great Britain." "What has that to do with you?" say those who are questioning him. Says he—"I did not suppose that I needed any new commission, I just took this old document and put it in my pocket, I thought it would authorize me to act as minister, cause one that is dead and gone, conferred by virtue of the authority conferred. What do you suppose our government would think of such a minister? Don't you think they would regard him as a madman, or beside himself? Certainly would. Do you suppose that God has less wisdom than our general government? Do you suppose that he lets things run at random? Or does he have a system, his kingdom? If our government would not receive a man on an old commission given to a person long ago, and gone, why should it be supposed that the Lord is so inconsistent as to say that Tom, Dick and Harry, and all the world, or part of it, were called to be ministers because a commission was given to eleven men some eighteen hundred years ago? Why, that commission did not authorize any but those to whom it was given; and to my mind it is supremely ridiculous for any person to claim that he is commissioned to preach and to administer the ordinances of the gospel, because eleven men received authority to do so eighteen hundred years ago.

Says one—"You are very uncharitable." Can't help it; if that uncharitable I will confess that I am uncharitable, and I cannot help it; though I believe that true charity leads us to believe things are reasonable, consistent and accordance with the word of God, and that I try to do. However, numerous my own imperfections are, it is my real desire, and has been from my youth to the present time, to be consistent. These are some reasons, among a multitude that might be named, why we Latter-day Saints, believe that the kingdom of God which was set in ancient days has had no place on the earth for some seventeen centuries past, so far as the eastern continent is concerned. The kingdom of God was set up in ancient America, and it existed until between three and four centuries after Christ, consequently when we say that it has not existed upon the earth for upwards of seventeen centuries past, we have reference particularly to the nations of the east.

Says one—"That is an awful condition for our earth to be in to have no Christian church upon it for