

**DISCOURSE**

By Elder **ORSON PRATT**, delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Dec. 10th, 1871.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

There is a large assembly of people now seated in this Tabernacle, and it will require a good deal of attention and stillness on the part of so large a congregation in order to hear distinctly and to understand what may be advanced. I have been in the habit for a few months past of selecting a text from the Scriptures. I do not do so this afternoon, for the reason that no particular text has presented itself to my mind; nevertheless I shall endeavor by the assistance of the Spirit of the Lord to speak upon subjects as they may be presented to me at the very moment. What they will be I know not. It is my earnest desire, however, that I may be favored with the faith and prayers of all good people who may be present, that peradventure the Lord may be merciful to us and shed forth a great abundance of His Holy Spirit to assist us on this occasion.

It is a strange thing to the greater part of the civilized world to see, or rather to contemplate, so many scores of thousands of people gathering together in the interior portions of North America, in the Rocky mountains or vicinity, all of one religious faith. It is a marvel, and produces a great deal of wonderment among the people, to understand what is the cause of this great assembling or gathering together, what it means, what the object is, what purpose is to be accomplished, what the designs of the people are and so forth. It is attracting the attention not only of our own nation but of many other nations—this feeling out, this gathering together of a people from so many parts of the world and coming together in the interior of this new world, in a country which, to all human appearance, was one of the most difficult countries in the known world to be settled. They wonder how it is that an influence can be exercised over the minds of so many people, among so many nations, to get them to leave the homes of their fathers, their native countries, their associates and friends, and go forth for thousands of miles upon railroad conveyance, and cross the ocean, and then pursue their journey for thousands of miles still further into the heart of a desert. This is a curious thing when we reflect upon it. I will here observe, however, that it is not the influence of man that has brought this great event about; man is not the origin of this great gathering which you see in the Territory of Utah. If you do not believe what I say, let any other society, I don't care how much talent they may have, how much human wisdom they may possess; let them attempt to accomplish a similar thing and see whether they can succeed. Take all the learning that is in the world, combine it together, send forth the most learned and talented orators among the nations, exercise all the human power and influence that God has given you, and attempt to accomplish a work similar to the one which is now before your eyes, and see if you can succeed. It can't be done; it never has been done, to my knowledge, since the days of our Savior. We have no account in history of any religious society gathering out from so many nations into one region of country, since the days of the Savior.

Do you wish to know the secret of this great gathering? Do you wish to know why it is that this influence has been exercised over the minds of the people? I will tell you: it is because God, who is in yonder heavens, has spoken in our day, that is the secret. It is because he has sent forth angels, messengers from heaven, who have appeared to men here on the earth, and have conversed with them. It is because God, by angels, and by his own voice, has sent forth messengers again unto the human family with an important message, a message more important, in one sense of the word, than any which has before been delivered to man—a message to prepare the way before the face and coming of his Son from the heavens.

Strangers may inquire, what has this great gathering to do with preparing the way before the coming of his Son? Could you not all remain scattered abroad among the nations and be prepared just as well? I answer, that if God had commanded us to remain among the nations in our scattered condition, that would have been right, and acceptable before him; but on the other hand, if God has spoken, as we declare that he has, and his voice has been heard, and messengers have been called and sent forth by divine command, and revelation has been given, not only for the people to obey the gospel but also to gather out and assemble themselves in one, then we could not be prepared for his coming without obeying the divine command. It all rests, therefore, on this point: has God spoken concerning this matter? Has He really instituted this thing? Has He given divine revelation in the 19th century? Has He sent forth His angels? If he has, then the work that is before you is the preparatory work for the coming of the Son of God. If he has not spoken, as we declare that he has, then a similar work will have to be performed in the future by some other people; for the very work which you now perceive—the gathering together of so many thousands, is clearly predicted by the ancient prophets; and if we are not

the people fulfilling these predictions, then another people must rise hereafter under similar circumstances to fulfil them, before the Son of God will come from the heavens, to reign here as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Much has been said about the coming of our Lord to reign here on the earth for a thousand years. We have now in the United States and in Great Britain, and other parts of the world, those who call themselves Second Adventists, who say they are going forth in order to prepare the way before the coming of the Lord. But are they fulfilling the predictions of the ancient prophets contained in this Bible? By no means. The first prediction to which I will refer you, upon this subject, that now occurs to my mind, is one that has been often repeated, for some forty-one years, by this people; but it is of so much importance, and interests this generation to that degree, that I never feel tired of repeating it. It will be found in that prophecy that was delivered to John on the Island of Patmos. He saw in vision, as represented in the 14th chapter of his prophecy, the Son of Man sitting on a cloud with a sharp sickle in his hands, clothed in glory and in power, and he saw angels at the same time, and one of them cried unto him that had the sharp sickle in his hands, that he should go forth and reap down the earth; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. Here was a view of the coming of the Son of Man. But before this—there was a preparatory work to perform, the nature of which is explained in the same chapter. This preparatory work is what I wish to call your special attention to on this occasion.

It was no less than a messenger that was to fly through the midst of heaven,—an holy angel, not something to be spiritualized, or that we can interpret according to our own views; not some great and renowned man that was to be raised up here on the earth, but an angel. "I saw another angel," says John, before the coming of Christ, before he saw that personage sitting on the cloud. "I saw another angel flying through the midst of heaven." Not a person raised up to go and preach here, and fly among the inhabitants of the earth, but flying through the midst of heaven. What particular message had this angel to convey, and to whom was he to convey it? John says, that this angel whom he saw flying through the midst of heaven, had the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth. To show how extensively it was to be preached, mark the next sentence: "To be preached unto them that dwell on the earth, unto every nation, kindred, tongue and people." Does not this include all? Does not the prediction take within its scope all mankind in the four quarters of the earth? It verily does. What was connected with this everlasting gospel that the angel should have, to be thus extensively preached among the inhabitants of the earth? What other prediction was uttered on that occasion? The angel proclaimed that the hour of God's judgment had come. He had the gospel to restore, however, before that judgment would fall on the nations. They must first hear it, they must first be warned, they must first receive the opportunity and privilege of receiving the message, after which, if they do not receive it, the angel said that the hour of God's judgment has come. Consequently we learn from these predictions some three or four very important things. First: that when the gospel is again committed to the inhabitants of the earth it is to be by an angel. Second: that when it is thus committed, it must be preached to all people under the whole heavens, without any exception of tongues or languages or races. Third: we learn that the hour of God's judgment was immediately to follow this preaching of the everlasting gospel.

Now mark what is predicted in the next verse. This was the first message; but John says, "I saw another angel follow him." There were two angels then, the first one with a message of the gospel of peace, proclaiming peace to the inhabitants of the earth, and then judgment immediately to follow. The second angel had no message of peace, but this was his proclamation: "Behold, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." We learn that a certain power, under the name of Great Babylon, is to meet with a total downfall after the gospel had been preached, that was to be brought by the angel. A third angel followed, and declared that all who would not receive the message of truth should be cast down, and should be punished and the smoke of their torment should rise up for ever and for ever. After having predicted the coming of these three angels he then proclaims the coming of the Son of God sitting on a cloud, of which I have spoken.

Now we have this important message to testify, and we testify it in all boldness; we testify it before the heavens, we testify it before the earth, we testify it in the name of the Lord God who has sent us, in the name of Jesus Christ who has redeemed us, that that angel has already come, that the 19th century is the favored century in which God has fulfilled this ancient prediction, uttered by the mouth of his ancient servant. God has indeed sent that angel, and when he came he revealed the everlasting gospel.

But I know what now rises in your hearts; I know what the strangers who are before me will say in their hearts, what they now think. Some of you now say in your hearts, we have the everlasting gospel

contained here in this book, the New Testament, and we have had it for some eighteen centuries or more, and consequently what was the use of another angel having the same everlasting gospel to commit to the children of men when we already had it? Now was not that in your hearts? I will venture to say that there were some in this congregation who were thinking of something very similar to this. Let me say in answer to this query that God has revealed the everlasting gospel anew. But what reason or purpose had he in so doing, say some, have we not sufficient written on the subject in the Bible? Have we not the gospel in great plainness, and why should he reveal it anew? I will tell you why. What is written in the New Testament in relation to the everlasting gospel is not as it was when it was first revealed; and as a testimony that it is not very plain, let me refer you to some five or six hundred different religious views, all founded on this same book, which you say contains the everlasting gospel. Why all these views, why all this distraction of faith? Why, for instance, does one sect believe in sprinkling, another in pouring, another in immersion, another rejecting baptism entirely, another baptizing those who profess to have obtained forgiveness of sins? Another class baptizing expressly for the remission of sins? Why is it that all these sentiments and religious notions prevail? Do not all these classes profess to found their faith on the New Testament, which they say contains the everlasting gospel? O yes. It shows clearly and plainly that there is something lacking. There are just as many sincere people, no doubt, who believe that sprinkling infants is the correct mode of baptism, as there are who believe in baptizing adults by immersion. One class is just as sincere as the other; one professes to believe and have confidence in the New Testament as well as the other. Now there must be something that is not quite so clear in the New Testament, or there would not be so great a diversity of opinion and sentiment!

We again refer to the everlasting gospel that the angel should bring! What might we expect when that angel comes? Could we not reasonably expect that when God sends an angel from heaven with the everlasting gospel he will make it so plain that there can be no misunderstanding in regard to any ordinance or any principle that is connected with it? That is what I should expect. The causes why these things are not so plain now in the New Testament, are these: the New Testament has been handed down, or its manuscripts, for a great many centuries, transcribed by the scribes of different generations. No doubt many of these were sincere and good men; but they have made, in the course of so many centuries, many great perversions in the text, in the original word I mean, in the Greek text, and also in the Hebrew so far as the Old Testament is concerned. I am not referring to the English manuscripts, but to the text written in what is termed the original Greek or Hebrew. These Greek and Hebrew manuscripts being transmitted from generation to generation, and transcribed and altered more or less, have fallen at length into the hands of the people of latter times in a state wherein they very much contradict each other. It is declared by the most learned archbishops and bishops, and men of great learning who have gathered together thousands of these ancient manuscripts and compared them one with another, that there are thirty thousand different readings of the original text. Not merely a different reading in one or two phrases, but of the original text, taking the Old and New Testament as a whole. When King James, in his day, set a great number of learned men apart to translate the Bible into the English language, they gathered together such manuscripts as they could get hold of. By examining them, they of course, did not know which were correct. They found them differing one with another in thousands of instances. Which were the most correct they, without inspiration, never could learn; but they did the very best they knew how. They are not to blame for those errors. They were men of integrity; they collected, according to the best of their understanding, and knowledge the manuscripts in existence and translated them according to the best information they had concerning the original languages. Hence originated this present English Bible, King James's translation. I am astonished when I look at this Bible, to find it is so correct; I am astonished, and it has been a mystery to me that it can be so correct with such an abundance of contradictions in the original manuscripts. As a general thing the meaning has not been altered much, but it has been altered sufficiently to produce all the confusion at present existing throughout Christendom. All these different denominations have arisen, founded on the same Bible and on the same text. What may we expect then when God sends an angel? Must we expect that he will give us a confused mass of something that we can not understand? Or may we not rather expect that he will impart to us the plainness and simplicity of his word, and call that the gospel, and call upon the nations of the earth to receive it? I answer that so far as reason is concerned, and good sound judgment, that is, so far as I can judge concerning reason, reason would say that the God of truth would communicate a message in perfect plainness, that could not be misunderstood by those who desired to know the right way.

Well, such was the fact. I hold in my

hand a record containing more writing than the New Testament; and this book, from the beginning to the end, was written by divine revelation, comprising history, prophecies and the gospel. It was written by an ancient people, a portion of the house of Israel, who dwelt in ancient America. Prophets and inspired men wrote this record upon plates of gold. They inform us that Jesus administered on this American continent in person, as well as on the little land of Palestine. They inform us that after his resurrection, and ascension from the land of Jerusalem to his Father, he descended on this American continent, that he taught them here at different times, appearing to them often, delivering to them his everlasting gospel in plainness and simplicity. He commanded them to write that gospel upon the plates that they kept their records on at that time, and which had been already handed down among them for about six hundred years. This book also informs us concerning the preaching of the gospel among the ancient Americans,—the ancient inhabitants of this country; that twelve men were called, not apostles, or rather that they were not called apostles, but disciples. Twelve disciples were chosen in ancient America and preached the gospel that the Son of God revealed to them in person. They proclaimed that gospel in the four quarters of this western hemisphere, in other words, on what we call South and North America; they built up the Church and Kingdom of God in this land and millions of the people received the gospel. They kept a record of this fact three hundred and eighty-four years after the coming of Christ, Mormon, who had charge of the records, after making an abridgment on other plates, in consequence of the apostasy of his portion of the nation, delivered the abridgment or the plates that contained it, into the hands of his son Moroni, a faithful prophet and servant of God, but the other plates he hid up in a hill in what we now call the State of New York. Moroni beheld the downfall of his nation, their destruction by the hands of another branch of the house of Israel, a powerful nation on this continent. The nation that kept these records was destroyed. Moroni, who was the last prophet entrusted with the plates, had to flee from place to place and hide up in dens and caves in order to preserve his own life. These records, four hundred and twenty years after the birth of Christ, were hidden up, at least that is the last date given on them. With them was deposited a sacred instrument that was possessed by the people on this continent, called the Urim and Thummim. Many predictions were uttered, not only by Moroni, but by many previous prophets, that these records in the last days, should be brought to light by the ministration of holy messengers; that God would bring them forth in order to prepare the way before the coming of his Son from the heavens. This, therefore, is the book that that angel whom John saw flying through the midst of heaven, has revealed to the inhabitants of the earth. This is the sacred book that contains the everlasting gospel revealed by the angel. This is the sacred book which God has commanded his servants to publish to the four quarters of the globe as a witness unto all nations before the Son of Man comes. This is the sacred book that contains the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he appeared on this American continent; this is the sacred book that will go forth, warning all people, nations and tongues before the Son of Man appears in his glory. If they receive it they will be blessed, if they receive it not then will be fulfilled that which was spoken by the mouth of John the Revelator concerning the hour of God's judgment coming upon them.

Does this book do away with those differences that exist in regard to many points of the doctrine of Jesus? Does it make it plain so that there is no chance of building up two different denominations from the doctrines it contains? I answer yes, there can not be established two different denominations founding their ideas on the doctrines of this book. Why? Because the doctrine is so plain in every point that it is impossible for any person with common sense not to understand it just as it is delivered and revealed. Hence you perceive that, that which we would naturally expect and reasonably hope for when the angel came is realized, namely a doctrine so plain that all the learning and wisdom of man can not wrest and twist and turn it and make it appear two different things. For instance, let us take the simple ordinance of baptism, what does the Book of Mormon say in regard to that one ordinance? Jesus, when he came to the American continent, they not having seen the true order of baptism in the same light that the Jews had in Palestine, condescended to point out to them how they should be baptized. He says first, you must believe in me and repent of your sins and become as a little child and go forth and be baptized for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the Holy Ghost; and then, to show how this ordinance was to be performed, he says that inasmuch as any one shall come forth desiring the ordinance of baptism, having repented of his sins, having believed in me, even Jesus Christ, you shall go down into the water and you shall baptize him in my name; you shall immerse him in the water, and come forth out of the water, and then he shall receive the Holy Ghost. Showing