DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF

AT THE

General Conference, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Monday Morning, April 6, 1891.

I have a few thoughts and reflections I would like to present to my friends, the Latter-day Saints. Fifty-two years ago the twenty-sixth day of this month I stood upon the Temple Block in Far West. Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Parley P. Pratt and others were in prison. The Lord had given a revelation and commanded us, as the Apostles, to go there upon that occasion to lay the foundation of that Temple. He appointed a day and a date on which we were commanded to perform this work. Then all was peace in Caldwell County, where we dwelt. The Lord perfectly understood what would take place before that time came. When the time came to fulfill this revelation the Latter-day Saints were in Illinois, they having been driven out of Missouri. The spirit of opposition was so great that our lives were in jeopardy in returning there to perform the revelation. When the day came for us to go there our Prophet was in prison for the Word of God and testimony of Jesus. When we convened with our patriarch and leading men, they said the Lord would not be with us if we went. They did not think it was wisdom for us to go, for Missourians had sworn by all the gods in existence that if all the other revelations and prophecies of "Joe Smith" had been fulfilled, that this one should not be, because there was a day and date to it. After hearing the views of Father Smith and others of the brethren, Brother Brigham Young asked the Twelve what their feelings were with regard to this. We told Brother Brigham that the Lord God had spoken and we were ready to obey, and leave the event in His hands. We did. We went there. We arrived at that place, according to that revelation and commandment, on the 26th day of April, 1839. We laid the corner stone of that Temple, with Father Cutler, who had been appointed to oversee that building. After that stone was laid we knelt upon it, and Brothers Brigham A. Smith and myself, who had been called by revelation to fill the places of some who had fallen, were ordained Apostles under the hands of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, John Taylor and John E. Page. These were member present. But they are all today in the spirit world, excepting myself, so far as I know. I name this, because I wish to say here to this congregation that during these fifty-two years that are past and gone I have had the opportunity of bearing my testimony to many of the nations of the earth and islands of the sea, and to the Latter-day Saints. And as I know not how long I may still have this privilege in the flesh, I feel it my duty to bear my testimony today to this people upon a few principles, and one is the subject upon which I touched a little yesterday.

There are a few persons who profess to believe that the Church has not had the living principle of revelation from heaven and the shadows of the world to since the death of the Prophet Joseph as it had while he lived. I want to say to those Latter-day Saints that I traveled with Joseph Smith in Ohio and mine in 1834 for the redemption of our brethren in Missouri. There are perhaps half a dozen men in this congregation today who were in that camp [Zion's camp]. We were with that Prophet of God. We heard his testimonies. We saw his revelations fulfilled. I was with him when he received that revelation given on Fishing River. Of course, we know that he was a Prophet of God, and that he held the keys of the kingdom of God. We knew the inspiration of Almighty God was with him, and that owing he proposed it came to pass. Those who are here today, Brother Oates, Brother Noble, and perhaps others, who were present on that occasion, will remember the day that Joseph Smith called the camp together. We were all well. There was no disease nor sickness in our camp. But he told us what awaited us. He gave us to understand that Israel was to be a chastisement visit our camp. He told us the reason. He had given counsel to the brethren with regard to many things, and a number of them had disobeyed that counsel. They did not understand and appreciate fully his position and standing as a Prophet of God. "Yes," says he, "you think of me as a toy, like the rest of you, but you will understand soon that I occupy a position where God governs and controls me." Those who were present know the feelings that we had. There was not a dry eye in camp. He stood in a wagon and told us the judgments of God would visit our camp and we would be chastised. These things came to pass. The day that we had the destroying angel visited our camp, and, of course, there was sorrow. I do not know the number that went to the grave, but somewhere about fourteen, I think. Then we understood that we had a Prophet in our midst. We knew very well that what he said would come to pass. Well, everything that was done in that camp, going and returning, a record of it, in a measure, has been kept. During that thousand miles journey the word of the Lord was given unto us, and we fully understood we were being led by a Prophet of God. We realized that all the way through that mission.

Now, I want to say that I have traveled with Joseph Smith a good deal in my day. I was associated with him more or less from the spring of 1835 to the day of his death. I knew, as do my brethren who were associated with him, that he was a Prophet of God—one of the greatest prophets God ever raised upon the earth. As I said yesterday, he received revelations upon every subject necessary for the organization of the Church—the organization of the Twelve Apostles, of the Seventies, of the High Councils, of the Bishops, etc. The Lord gave revelations upon all these things, until we had the pattern set before us. He laid the foundation of a great work in this the greatest dispensation God ever gave to man. So much in testimony of Brother Joseph Smith.

In 1847 I likewise traveled one thousand miles with Brother Brigham Young, the man who was called to lead Israel after the Prophet Joseph's death. There is a number in this house who came in the pioneer company. We had in Zion's Camp two hundred and five souls. We had in the Pioneer Camp one hundred and forty-five, I believe. And I can testify before God, angels and men that the same power, and the same spirit of revelation were manifest in his work up to the day of his death as were manifest in the work of the Prophet Joseph. It is true, Joseph Smith's life was short. The Savior labored only three and a half years after He entered into the ministry, before He was crucified. The Prophet Joseph labored fourteen years before he was martyred. President Brigham Young lived longer. He led this Church over a number of years. I was with him when he came into this valley. I was in the same carriage with him. He was taken sick on the Weber. A number of the camp were taken sick, caused, no doubt, by the change in coming to these mountains from the region we had left. He began to be cured from the hour that he entered into this valley. He came here, and what did he do? I will name a few circumstances. He pitched camp some distance southeast of here. The next morning he and the Twelve who came with him took a walk. He had been quite feeble, but he was then able to walk with the assistance of his staff. We walked along until we came to this Temple Block. It was covered with sagebrush. There was no mark to indicate that God ever intended to place anything there. But while walking along Brother Brigham stopped very suddenly. He stuck his cane in the ground and said, "Right here will stand the great Temple of our God." We drove a stake in the place indicated by him, and that particular spot is situated in the middle of the Temple site. One of the first things President Young did after he got here was to order the preparing of a block down here, called the Old Fort, where the camp could gather in. This country then was very desolate, covered with wild sage, and that pretty near dead, too. There was hardly anything here with life, owing to the excessive dryness. We went to work and surrounded this ten acre block to preserve ourselves; put adobe walls on three sides and log cabins on the east side. This was the work we labored by President Brigham Young all his life—care and caution, and safety for the people. He then went to work and laid out this city. There was not a living soul in this valley excepting a few Indians who would set round crickets for their dinner. He laid out these streets, these sidewalks, these blocks. He laid out the Temple block here. A number of councils were held with regard to it. Brother George A. Smith was very anxious that we should have forty acres instead of ten; so much so that there was a vote taken to lay forty acres. A. Smith and myself, who had been called by revelation to fill the places of some who had fallen, were ordained Apostles under the hands of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, John Taylor and John E. Page. These were members