

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

ELDER ORSON PRATT,

In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, June 20th, 1880.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

The gathering of the Saints—Their sufferings—Ancient predictions fulfilled—Crickets and their miraculous destruction—Crops saved—Desert made fruitful—God's kingdom in the mountains—Its future destiny—The coming of the Lord.

I WILL call the attention of the congregation to a few verses, contained in the 50th Psalm, and the first six verses: "The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself." It is very evident that the Psalmist, when writing these words, must have been inspired of the living God; for the events, here foretold, are clearly set forth in many other parts of the sacred scriptures. Two very important events are announced here; one is, the gathering of the Saints,—those who have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice;—and another is the coming of the Lord, not his first coming, but his second advent, when a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him; when he shall, in other words, come in his majesty, in his power, in great glory, or as the apostle Paul expresses it in one of his epistles to the Thessalonians, "he shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." There seems to be connected with this advent of the Lord from the heavens, great power; his arm is to be made manifest before all people. Preparatory to this great event, there will be a universal gathering of the Saints from the four quarters of the earth. It is one of the signs preceding the second advent. It is clearly foretold by many of the prophets. David alludes to it, not only in this Psalm, but in many parts of his Psalms. The spirit of God seems to have moved upon him to portray more or less the great work of the gathering of the Saints in the last days. Many suppose that he will come and find the Saints scattered all over the world, not gathered into any special country; but it is evident that those who have taken this view of the subject don't understand the Scripture writings. Nothing is plainer in all the sacred Scriptures than the gathering of the people of God. The Apostle Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, prophesies "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." It seems to be a new dispensation, a dispensation that is characterized by the words "fulness of times." When these times shall be fulfilled, when the day shall come for this great preparatory work to take place, the Lord will signify it, by speaking from the heavens; or as it is here stated, in the fourth verse of this Psalm which I have just read, "he shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." From this we draw the conclusion, that when the dispensation shall be fully ushered in, when the time for the great preparatory work shall take place, the heavens will no longer be sealed up, but the Lord will again speak, will call to the heavens, call upon his angels, call upon the ancient prophets who have died and gone the way of the whole earth, and are dwelling in the heavens, to do the work assigned to them, in the great and last dispensation of

the fulness of times, in bringing about the gathering and restitution of his people upon the face of the earth. David, in the 107th Psalm, has very clearly portrayed this wonderful and great event. Perhaps it may be well for us to read the exact words. He commences the Psalm thus: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Now notice the gathering—"and gathered them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south." It seems to be a gathering from the four points of the compass, out of all lands. You might inquire if the prophets have said anything special in relation to the country where these saints or people of God are to be gathered. Let us read the next verse. After gathering them out of the different countries and lands, from the east, west, north and south, the Psalmist says, "They wandered in a wilderness, in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way," etc. Now this cannot refer to any former dispensation of gathering. When the children of Israel in ancient days were collected together as a body, they were not taken from the east, west, north and south, but they were taken from one little country—the land of Goshen in Egypt. From there this handful of people, about twenty-five hundred thousand, were taken, and in the course of time were permitted to inhabit the land of Canaan. But this gathering that is here spoken of informs us that they are to be gathered out of all lands. Who? The redeemed of the Lord,—people who have heard the message of redemption, obeyed the ordinances of redemption, received the gospel of redemption, and were the people of God, the people of Christ; they were the ones that were to wander in the wilderness, after they were thus gathered, and that wilderness would be a solitary way. Now, in gathering from Egypt to the land of Canaan, they wandered, it is true, in a small wilderness, on the east side of the Red Sea, but instead of bringing them forth where there was no city or habitation, he brought them forth to large and populous cities. The first city that they came to, after crossing from the east side of Jordan to the land on the west side, was the great city of Jericho, which the Lord delivered into their hands; and then there were numerous other cities that are mentioned in the Book of Joshua, which were delivered into the hands of the people. The children of Israel gathered out of one land; but this latter day gathering was to be a people called "the redeemed of the Lord;" they were to go into a wilderness country, into a solitary country. They were called, in many parts of the scripture writings, "the people of Zion," and "the Zion of the latter-days." The Lord calls them by this special name in the 51st chapter of Isaiah, and these are the words that are used: "For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." When I was a boy I was inclined to attend very frequently the meetings that were held by the different denominations in the State of New York, my native State. I often heard this prophecy of Isaiah sung, by those who were singing anthems of praise to the Lord, "The Lord shall comfort Zion," etc., but little did I know, in my boyhood or youth, what was meant by these predictions of Isaiah. It seems that the people of Zion are to be gathered out from all lands, from every nation under heaven, from the four points of the compass, and are to be brought into a solitary place, a wilderness, and when they arrive in that solitary place or wilderness, they will, at first, be greatly afflicted, sorely distressed, so much so that they will be under the necessity of crying unto the Lord, and he will deliver them from their distress. "They found no city to dwell in," says David. Now, this was the case with the Latter-day Saints, whom the Lord commanded to gather together. When we started forth over the great desert plain, where there were no settlements, no cities, no towns, traveling hundreds of miles without any track to guide

us, it was a "solitary way," and rendered more terrible by the wild beasts that roamed over the plains. We could hear the sound of the wolf in his howlings; we could hear the sounds of the buffaloes in their bellowings, but the sound of the human voice, from any village, or town, or settlement was unknown for hundreds of miles. We commenced this journey in the year 1846, leaving the great Mississippi River in the cold month of February. After a portion of us had crossed the river in boats, the river was frozen over, and the rest of the company crossed in wagons on the ice. We had no grass to sustain our teams. Our teams depended upon the cottonwoods, and bark of trees, and a little corn that we could occasionally get by sending down to the settlements, and by our purchasing for that purpose. We wandered in the wilderness "in a solitary way," and when we had traveled some fourteen hundred miles—we found no city to dwell in, just precisely as the Psalmist said would be the case. We entered this valley in the month of July, 1847, having been detained during the winter, by sending over 500 of our people,—young and middle aged men—to help the United States in their war against Mexico. That detained us during the winter, so that we could not journey any further than Council Bluffs, or the regions a little above Omaha, where we built up a temporary residence. The next spring we started off, traveling over the plains "in a solitary way," and entered this valley just about where Fort Douglass is now established on the bench; we called it Emigration Cañon. We came down here upon this plot of ground in the month of July, and commenced planting a few potatoes. It was very late to put in any corn, but we wished to try the soil to see whether there was any virtue in it. We found it, however, like an ash heap. It seemed as though there had been no rain upon the land for years. We could dig down a great depth in many places where this city now stands, without finding scarcely any moisture, but we succeeded by taking the water from the creek—City Creek we call it—in flooding a small portion of ground, and put in our potatoes, and planted corn, a few beans, garden seeds, etc., to see if there was any virtue in the soil. What were the results of our first crop? We found that there was fruitfulness in the soil; but of course it was too late for anything to be matured. That same fall or autumn of 1847, several thousand of the Latter-day Saints followed up our track. They came upon the land in the fall of the year, bringing with them a little breadstuffs to sustain them during the winter, and also our farm utensils, and everything in the shape of wearing apparel that could be brought. We had not much to bring, for we had already been driven four or five times in the United States, from our houses and from our lands; much of our bedding was burnt; our stores torn down, and the goods carried into the street and destroyed. Hence, we had not much to bring with us; but we came trusting in our God, and we found that the Lord really fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, and made the wilderness to blossom as the rose, made the desert to bloom like the Garden of Eden—literally fulfilling that which our Gentile religious denominations had been singing in my ears, when I was a youth. Very pleasant song to those who did not understand it, but much more pleasant to those who do understand and are fulfilling it. We made great calculations in laying off this city. We did not lay it off merely one mile square, as if we were doubtful as to whether there would be any inhabitants to occupy it, nor two miles square, but we laid it off covering an area of about five square miles. We expected that there would be a great emigration. Upon what did we found our expectation? Was it upon our own natural judgment? No; we founded our expectation upon that which God had spoken in the modern revelations which he had given to us as a people. He told us, by revelation, before our prophet was murdered, that we would have to leave the United States, go beyond the Rocky Mountains, and seek our home in the wilderness, and that we would have a great people gather with us. We believed his words: we laid out this city accordingly; and now all that remains for us or strangers to do, in regard to the fulfillment of these expectations, is to ride from one end of this city to the other, and see if there is much spare ground, see if the lots are not pretty generally occupied, and the city

pretty well filled with inhabitants. "And he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein." At first, before the joy and gladness came, this other prophecy was fulfilled! "Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them," then they cried unto the Lord in their afflictions, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of all their distress. It is not necessary for me to enumerate all our privations, such as the shortness of provisions, and how many had to live on the roots that sprung out of the ground, how many had to boil up the hides of their cattle that had transported them across the plains; it is not necessary to enter into all these particulars. I do not know that it is necessary for us even to speak of a great trial of our faith, that we had after we had been here many months. We planted our crops in the spring, and they came up, and were looking nicely, and we were cheered with the hopes of having a very abundant harvest. But alas! it very soon appeared as if our crops were going to be swallowed up by a vast horde of crickets, that came down from these mountains—crickets very different to what I used to be acquainted with in the State of New York. They were crickets nearly as large as a man's thumb. They came in immense droves, so that men and women with brush could make no headway against them; but we cried unto the Lord in our affliction, and the Lord heard us, and sent thousands and tens of thousands of a small white bird. I have not seen any of them lately. Many called them gulls, although they were different from the sea-gulls that live on the Atlantic coast. And what did they do for us? They went to work, and by thousands and tens of thousands, began to devour them up, and still we thought that even they could not prevail against so large and mighty an army. But we noticed, that when they had apparently filled themselves with these crickets, they would go and vomit them up, and again go to work and fill themselves, and so they continued to do, until the land was cleared of crickets, and our crops were saved. There are those who will say that this was one of the natural courses of events, that there was no miracle in it. Let that be as it may, we esteemed it as a blessing from the hand of God; miracle or no miracle, we believe that God had a hand in it, and it does not matter particularly whether strangers believe or not.

We found no city here to dwell in. What did we do? Went to work and began to build a great city. This also was foretold in this same Psalm, "He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground. A fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs." We found that when we came and began to irrigate the land, and the rains began to descend from the heavens, the earth began to take on a fresh appearance, and the dry ground became like water springs. "And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation." Now when the Israelites went into Canaan, they found cities already prepared, but we had to prepare our own city. "And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease." Now, the Latter-day Saints who have been here, since the arrival of the first companies in the year 1847, can realize how much the Lord has multiplied this people. We are as it were overrun with children. If strangers will take the opportunity of going to some of our oldest towns, and through our various settlements, they will find vast numbers of children, perhaps more children in our country than in any other country in the United States of the same population. This is very clearly spoken of here, "He blessed them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease." Again he says, in the 41st verse, "Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock." Those that are acquainted with some of our poor men, and when they go and look at one man's family; for this is in the singular number—"he maketh him families like a flock"—when we see one man's family like a flock, we may know the Lord has fulfilled this prophecy in regard to the gathering of the Saints in the

latter-days. "The righteous shall see it and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth." The latter part of the sentence is not yet fulfilled, but the fore part is fulfilled; the righteous hath seen these "families like a flock," and the people greatly multiplied upon the face of the land. "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." That is, they are the children of the light. They can see that the Lord our God is fulfilling that which he had purposed to fulfil, when the day for the gathering of his Saints should commence. They can see that that which has occurred corresponds with that which was predicted. Again, they can see how the righteous prosper and flourish; how their cattle increase, and how the Lord has made this wilderness, this desert, this waste country, like the garden of Eden.

Paul, I have no doubt, saw this dispensation of the "fulness of times," or he never would have predicted the great gathering that should then take place, namely "all things in Christ"—notice that expression; not those who are out of Christ, not those who have not been baptized into Christ; but "all things in Christ; both which are in heaven and which are on the earth; even in him."

This forcibly puts me in mind of the parable of our Savior concerning this great latter-day gathering. In the 24th chapter of Matthew he speaks of his second coming "in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," and how the gospel should be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, before he should come in his glory. In the next chapter, in order that his disciples might fully understand his sayings, he goes on to explain that at that particular period the kingdom of heaven should be likened unto ten virgins; not the former kingdom that was to be built up, when he came on the earth in the flesh; that was not likened unto ten virgins; but at the time he should commence the great work of gathering, that whosoever the main body of the kingdom is gathered together, from the four quarters of the earth, preparatory to his second coming, then, at that time, should the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth—(signifying that they did not remain in their native lands)—to meet the Bridegroom. It was a literal gathering out; and after they had gathered out, taking their lamps with them, they began to be sleepy, and it is written "they all slumbered and slept." It was a time to sleep, a time of drowsiness; it is called midnight; but when all was silent, and when probably the world outside was not looking for anything very great, was careless and indifferent, a voice was heard in the depth of this silence, saying, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Then all those virgins awoke, both the wise and the foolish. The wise ones trimmed their lamps, and had some oil left; but the lamps of the foolish had gone out, because there was no oil in them. It seems that they had been so careless, that all the Spirit of God—which may be compared to the oil that gives brightness to the lamps—had gone out of them, and their lamps would not burn. "Well," said they, "what shall we do? We have been expecting the Bridegroom, as well as you that are wise; we believed the gospel, but really we have been too careless; the spirit has been withdrawn from us; there is no oil in our lamps; cannot you give us some? won't you sell us a little?" "Oh, no," say the wise ones, "we almost fear we have not got enough for ourselves; if you want any, you had better go and buy of those who want to sell." Hence, five that had gathered were foolish and five were wise. The wise entered in with the Bridegroom; and the door was shut before the foolish ones could get in. But they afterwards arrived and begged to be admitted; and the question was asked, "Who are ye?" "We have been here among your people for a long time. Have we not cast out devils at a certain time? Have we not been on missions? Have we not healed the sick and done many wonderful works in your name?" What is the reply? "I know you not." Why? Because they have apostatized; they have lost the oil out of their lamps; they failed to be prepared for the coming of the Savior. Therefore they were bound, as it were, hand and foot, and delivered over to the wicked world, to suffer the same punishment as those that would not receive the truth, and perhaps even greater.