

## ELDER RICHARDS'S LECTURE.

Lecture seven of the M. I. A. series was delivered in the Assembly Hall March 10, the subject being Was Joseph Smith sent of God? and the lecturer, Elder Franklin D. Richards of the quorum of Apostles. The hall was well filled and the discourse, which was highly interesting, was listened to with marked attention. The musical exercises were rendered by members of the Twentieth ward choir under the leadership of Prof. J. J. Dayner.

The speaker prefaced his remarks by saying that he could not avoid entering upon the subject with trepidation. It was a question of momentous importance and one which in its dictation would require the spirit of the Lord, therefore he asked for the faith and prayers of those assembled. Elder Richards quoted the words of Moses and of the Apostle Paul with relation to the great work of the Lord, which had finally been taken from the earth and restored again in this dispensation. He cited the condition of the human family during that dark period of nearly fourteen centuries, when there was not a single person upon the earth who could rise up and say, Thus saith the Lord.

In the spring of 1820, continued the speaker, Joseph Smith, a mere boy 14 years of age, became anxious to know which of all the religious denominations then extant was true. So in all his eagerness to learn for himself this thing he repaired into the woods and knelt down in fervent prayer, and poured out his whole soul's sincerity to God, to ask Him for the information he desired. His prayer was answered by God the Father and the Son appearing unto him, the latter telling him that none of the churches then existing was true. What a condescension! said the speaker. The Father and the Son appearing unto a mere boy after a period of fourteen centuries in which not a heavenly voice was heard. Shortly afterwards the angel Moroni appeared to this same boy and gave to him instructions as to what the Lord wanted him to do. He told him that it was the Father's purpose to establish the true Church upon the earth and that Joseph was to be an instrument in bringing this about.

In September, 1827, there was entrusted to this boy Prophet's care the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was written. They were given into his keeping for the sole purpose of translation. Part of these plates were sealed and bound together, but it was only the part not in this condition that Joseph was to translate. He did this by means of the Urim and Thummim, Joseph reading and uttering the words to a scribe who took them down as they were expressed. The book containing some 600 pages was translated in a thorough, systematic and Godlike manner. In translating the work Joseph and Oliver Cowdery who were thus engaged came to a passage wherein it stated that no man could enter into the kingdom of heaven except through baptism. This led them to go out and inquire of the Lord concerning this ordinance. And what was the result? asked the speaker. Their prayers

were answered by the appearance of John the Baptist, who conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood and bade Joseph to baptize Oliver and Oliver in turn to baptize Joseph. Their baptism was by immersion, as directed by that same personage who baptized Jesus Christ Himself in the river Jordan. Thus they were given authority which had not been upon the earth for nearly fourteen centuries, and at the same time were told that greater authority would be given them in due season.

Elder Richards said that Joseph had written no definite account as to the precise date of his receiving the Melchisedek Priesthood, but it was recited by a Mr. Everett who died a few years ago in St. George. It was during a period when Joseph and Oliver were suffering considerable persecution at the hands of their enemies. Weary and fatigued with their journey in escaping from those who were striving to do them bodily harm, Oliver exclaimed, Oh Joseph, when will these persecutions come to an end? At this moment three personages appeared unto them—Peter James and John—and they were ordained to the Melchisedek Priesthood and given the keys and power to baptize others and confer upon them the Priesthood of Almighty God.

In April, 1830, in Fayette, Seneca county, New York, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized according to the laws of the state of New York. It had six members and upon its organization and restoration to the earth in this latter dispensation, Joseph and Oliver were ordained to the Apostleship and the Church commenced to make itself known. Meanwhile the work of translating the Book of Mormon went on and when completed, a man named Martin Harris was brought into requisition and he turned to and got sufficient money to pay for the printing of the book.

Following this the Lord continued to reveal Himself to His servants as occasion required, enlightening them and the entire Church in the principles and ordinances of the Gospel and giving them all the instructions required for the work of the ministry. Joseph and Oliver were also caught up in the spirit and were instructed in the things contained in Section 76 of the book of Doctrine and Covenants. The writings therein contained were far ahead of anything ever published and were given to the servants referred to while still in the spirit. Was Joseph Smith sent of God? asked the speaker.

On December 25, 1832 the Prophet Joseph predicted war between the North and the South and on Dec. 20, 1860 the first indication of that war was formulated by the people of South Carolina who declared their withdrawal from the union of states precipitating a battle in which nearly a million souls lost their lives. The revelation was first published in the year 1850, ten years prior to the great outbreak. This, said the speaker, was sufficient in itself to show that Joseph Smith was indeed a Prophet sent of God. Other revelations were also cited to show that the Prophet was apprised of many things that should come to pass in the latter days, among

them that which referred to the gathering of the Ten Tribes of Israel.

In February, 1835, Joseph called the Saints together and appointed Martin Harris, David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, to choose twelve Apostles for the Church, which they did. After this the work of the ministry was begun in earnest and missionaries were sent out to preach the Gospel and to call the people to repentance, at the same time apprising them of the ushering in of the Latter-day dispensation. Elder Richards read Joseph's account of the blessings that were poured out upon the Saints at this time. They enjoyed a veritable Pentecost, said the speaker, and although the Prophet's name was not published in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the works which he had left behind him, should be sufficient to tell of the position which he has occupied. By their fruits, ye shall know them, said the Father.

Elder Richards recited the traits and attributes of the Prophet and showed the position in which he and his brother Hyrum were placed, when they went to Carthage, the Prophet giving utterance to the statement, I go like a lamb to the slaughter, but it shall yet be said of me, that I was murdered in cold blood. His work was then finished upon the earth and he was taken hence to join the glorious spirits in the great beyond, mingling with them and there working in the ministry as he had done while here upon the earth.

The work was going on and it would continue to progress and push forward until God's purposes had been accomplished upon the earth. There was sufficient evidence following the Prophet's walk and conversation while in the flesh to admit of the unequivocal declaration that Joseph Smith was sent of God. Miraculous manifestations of the power of God had been witnessed by the Saints in early days through the ministrations of the Prophet, and the power was still upon the earth to receive similar blessings if the Saints would live so as to enjoy them. Did it not then clearly show that Joseph Smith was sent of God?

In conclusion the speaker testified to the divinity of the Prophet Joseph's mission and exhorted the young people to remember that which they heard from time to time that their faith might be strengthened and that they might be spared to take an active part in building up the Church and Kingdom of God.

Elder James E. Talmage was announced as the next speaker, his subject being The Foundations of Faith.

## THE SALT RIVER VALLEY.

MESA, Arizona, March 7, 1897.—The people in the north, as a general rule, have an idea that Arizona is but the synonym of a barren desert, intensely hot where abound rattlesnakes, scorpions, centipedes, gila monsters, tough and dangerous cowboys, Indians and outlaws. True, there are such things and characters even in Arizona, but they do not find a congenial home in the great Salt River valley, appropriately termed the garden spot of the territory.

Imagine an immense level plain