

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER ERASTUS SNOW,

At Meadowville, Bear Lake, on
Tuesday Evening August
3rd, 1880.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

Brethren and sisters, we are happy to greet you to-night, although it is late and we are tired. But we have come to visit you and also other settlements of this valley, and if the Lord shall bless us and enable us, we desire to do you good. We live and labor for that purpose. President Taylor and a few of his brethren have come to attend the Quarterly Conference of this Stake of Zion, to be held at Paris on Sunday, and also to attend to some other matters in this valley, and to view the condition of the people, the improvement they have made, and to feel after their spirits and to let the people feel after our spirits, that each may judge for himself and herself as to whether we are one in spirit and in hopes and faith, and if we are one in our desires and labors working to the one common end. In short, whether we belong to the same family, whether we are brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus. We have reason to hope, yes, we believe we shall find that you are our brethren and sisters; and although we may be separated a long way from each other at times in our labors and our homes and abiding places, yet we hope and trust that the same Spirit that we received when we believed the Gospel and were baptized with Christ, is with us whether we be in the north or in the south; and if we have the one God who is near to us all, who hears our prayers when He is sought unto by His children, He will visit us all by the manifestations of His mercy and power, and with His Holy Spirit, that brings peace and love and brotherly kindness, and which fills the hearts of His Saints with that confident hope which is as an anchor of the soul. We feel that we have the same God, and that He is our Father, and that He is pouring out His blessings upon the earth and rewarding our labors.

As for myself, I have come a long way from the South, where the climate is very hot in the summer. I may say that St. George comes up to Bear Lake to cool off in the summer; and Bear Lake may go down to St. George in the winter to find a more genial climate. We have a variety of climate in this Territory. When at home I live within 64 miles of the south line of our Territory, while you are perhaps 12 miles within the northern boundary. And thus we see that the Latter-day Saints are stretching forth, and we are not only filling up our own Territory, but we are running over the wall into the adjoining States and Territories, east and west, north and south. Our people are already settling in Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, and are stretching into Old Mexico.

Now, some may inquire in their minds, and perhaps marvel, seeing that it is the calling of this people to gather together, and then see them spread abroad, as we have commenced to do. Where is the land of Zion, that we have talked about so much? Did not the Lord say to the Prophet Joseph that the place He had selected for the location of the New Jerusalem was on the borders between Jew and Gentile, in the western borders of the State of Missouri, and that the site for the great Temple to be built was Independence, Jackson County? Yes, He did, and the Saints began to go there, and they began to murmur, and to find fault with one another and with the Lord, and they began to wonder why He wanted them to build a Temple, and what need there was of bringing in their tithes and offerings to His storehouse to erect a costly and expensive building. And thus many began to chide the Lord and also one another. And because of this the Lord suffered their enemies to come upon them and drive them from their homes, which they did in fulfillment of a revelation which was given previous to this calamity coming upon them. But the Lord said in a subsequent revelation, after the Saints were expelled in Jackson County, that Zion should not be removed out of her place; that although the Saints had been scattered and despoiled of their property, yet in the own due time of the Lord the faithful should return and possess the land.

Now, the latter part of this revelation we look to be fulfilled, for just as certain as the former part came to pass foretelling the expulsion of the Saints, so sure will the latter part be fulfilled predicting the return of the Saints to build the Temple upon the place pointed out by the finger of the Lord; and it will be the great centre for the Latter-day Saints where the ordinances of God's house will be administered, and where the Lord will make manifest His power unto His people. But then that is not the only place. This whole land of America was promised anciently to Joseph for an inheritance, by the mouth of his father and other prophets. Nephi and Lehi, and many others predicted blessings upon the righteous on this land, and that it should be a land of freedom to those who would serve God; and that it should not be a land on which the wicked should prosper long. And every nation that has inhabited this land since the flood have been destroyed out of it when they were fully ripe in their iniquity. The ancient Jaredites inhabited this land about 1,600 years; and they became a very wealthy and great nation. They dwelt in North America, they did not extend their settlements into South America; and when they were fully ripe in their iniquity God destroyed them out of the earth. They were destroyed by pestilence and war until only one man was left of that race. The Nephites succeeded them and possessed the land a short time before the complete destruction of the Jaredites. The Nephite race commenced in South America, their progenitor having first landed there. After living several hundred years in South America they began to extend their settlements into North America before they had any knowledge of the Jaredites. But the Nephites in like manner, when they became fully ripe in iniquity, perished as a nation after occupying the land about 1,000 years. The Lamanites continued in war for many years after the destruction of the Nephite nation, until they became broken up into bands or small nations, which was the result of great wickedness among them; and the remnants of the Lamanite race are still found scattered over the land in the same broken condition.

But the Lord made certain covenants with their fathers to the effect that their descendants should not utterly perish but should be restored to His favor in the latter days. We look for the fulfillment of this great promise, made to the Lamanites and the remnants of the Nephites that became intermixed with the Lamanites; and the remnants of the Jacobites, Josephites, Zoramites, Lemuelites and Ishmaelites; for all belong to the same family—the tribe of Joseph through the loins of Ephraim and Manasseh. Father Jacob, when he was 130 years old, knowing that he was about to die, called his twelve sons together and bestowed upon them his blessing. And when we came to Joseph's blessing, we find these words: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him, and hated him. But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." See Genesis 50th chapter.

Now this Joseph was the same that had been sold by his brethren into Egypt, and afterwards had become the savior of his father's household, and been exalted to the throne of Egypt. This Joseph was to be a fruitful bough, whose branches should run over the wall. This was a figurative expression emblematic of the seed of Joseph leaving the land of their fathers, the land of Canaan, which was given to the tribes of Israel in Canaan. A branch of Joseph, that fruitful bough, left that land and ran over the wall, even crossed the sea to the American continent and filled this land with his seed. And the Lamanites, Lamuelites, Ishmaelites, etc., etc., were all brethren, although a portion of them turned away from the Lord and called themselves Lamanites, etc., while those who adhered to the principles of the Gospel were called Nephites, Nephi being their prophet and leader. The people that are scattered to and fro upon this continent, whom we call the American Indians, are the remnants of the different branches of the tribe of Joseph and perhaps a remnant of Mulek's company who built Zarahemla.

That same patriarch Jacob, after blessing his own sons, called to him Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and blessed them also, and said, "Let them grow together in the midst of the earth." "Manasseh shall become a people, and he also shall be great;" but Ephraim "shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations." In this American land more especially has this prediction of the Patriarch Jacob been fulfilled; the seed of Joseph through his two sons have grown together and become a "multitude of nations." They have stretched abroad and occupied this whole American continent, maintaining their separate and distinct tribal organizations. But they have fallen into darkness, and many of them into deep barbarism; yet there is a remnant of them who have much faith, and who are looking for the fulfillment of the promises which God made to their fathers, which are preserved in their traditions as well as in the Book of Mormon, and they have had the Spirit directing their minds to those utterances of the prophets concerning their father's seed; and there are many bands, tribes and villages whose hearts the Lord is preparing to receive the blessings He has promised concerning them, namely, restoring them to the possession of light and knowledge and the gifts and blessings of the Gospel.

Now, we who are permitted to be numbered with the Latter-day Saints and to be called the people of the Lord, and who have been gathered together into these mountains, we are called upon to do a work for the Lamanites, to carry the Gospel to them, to labor to enlighten them and teach them the words of life, how to become useful in building up Zion and sanctifying themselves to prepare themselves for the coming of the Son of Man.

You may consider that you are not doing much towards it in Bear Lake Valley, and that your chief object is to raise cattle and get land where you can grow wheat, corn, etc., to sustain your families; you think this is all you have to do, because comparatively you are like children yet in the knowledge of God. But if you have not forgotten the testimony of your fathers and the Elders of Israel who have testified in your hearing who have told you these things, you know that you are children of Prophets and Apostles and Elders of Israel, righteous and good men, who have passed away. You know that being their children you are heirs to the promises and that you are called to a holy work. And you cannot treat this calling with indifference, neither can you forget it, because the prayers of your fathers and mothers which have been offered up in your behalf, prayers the most earnest and fervent which are preserved in those golden vials described by John the Revelator, which he saw in heaven representing the prayers of the Saints, the prayers and blessings of your fathers and mothers in your behalf are, as it were, engraven upon the palms of His hands, and the Lord will not forget them; and He will visit them upon your heads. The prayers and blessings of your fathers and mothers and the Elders of Israel and the testimony which they have borne in your hearing, you will not forget although you may neglect your duties and manifest for a time somewhat indifference to them; although the cares and responsibilities of life may seem to occupy your thoughts at the present to such an extent as to make your religious duties secondary, yet you cannot forget these things, the Lord will not let you do it; His Spirit will follow you and it will awaken you to thought and reflection like one gently wrapping at your bed-room door calling you to arise. And this gentle Monitor will keep urging you to perform your duties and to remember the covenants of your fathers, and to seek after the realization of those promises which were made by them to Almighty God through the mouths of His servants. And I would say, search the revelations of God given through modern prophets, for there are many precious things spoken and on record; things most precious in which you are interested, spoken not only by modern prophets, but by His ancient servants who though dead yet speaketh. Yes, search the Book of Mormon too, also the Bible; and study well the life and teachings of the Savior, and store up His doctrine in your hearts; and also search the records and history of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and consider the sayings and teachings of the Elders

and faithful women that have passed away, even your fathers and mothers, some of whom have sealed their testimony with their blood, and those who have not suffered martyrdom have left their testimony for the good of their children, after wearing out a life through suffering, exposure, hardships, anxiety and care and much preaching, in order to lay the foundation for the establishment of truth in the earth, and to plant it in good soil, that it may become a goodly tree with wide-spreading branches bearing much precious fruit.

The early Elders of this Church, whether dead or alive, are filled with anxiety respecting their children, the rising generation, because they know this to be the work of God; they are not in doubt about it; they know that God lives and rules, and that He stands at the head of this His Church and kingdom; they know that He has brought forth and established this people in the earth, and that although He has suffered their enemies to persecute them and drive them, yet He has overruled all things for their best good; it has been consecrated for their welfare, it has strengthened them, it has rendered them more vigorous in their growth and more persevering and diligent in their labors; and it has increased their influence in the world. Never before did the influence of the Latter-day Saints reach so far; never before has that influence and their power been felt so strongly in the midst of the earth as to-day. And this stretching out and occupying the valleys of the mountains, the good locations in all parts of this land, is only a part of the plan and purposes of God respecting His people, that we may be the better able to exert an influence for good throughout this nation and even this North American continent, and among all the people thereof. For we are a growing people, and because of this growth (the immigration of the Lord's poor from abroad and the immigration from the heavens in the shape of additions to our families), our children as they grow up, begin to look around for dwelling places for themselves, and begin to cry out, "The place is too strait for us, give us room that we may dwell." We want to spread abroad; we want to go across the hills to see what valleys lie beyond in the hope of finding possessions for our children; and the Lord is moving upon us to do this. And in this, as in other things, He expects us to be aided, and governed by the counsels of His servants. He wishes us to occupy the land, because the time is coming when He proposes to give it to us, and give us the rule over it. I suppose you voted at the general election yesterday; it is a part of your duty, because by voting at the polls we establish our rule and government in the land. We elect our magistrates, and the time will come when we will elect our own judges and governor; and the President of the United States will not have power to appoint all our rulers, that is our governors, judges, marshals, etc.; this state of things will not always continue. We are required to exercise our rights as citizens; it is our duty to do it. By and by we will exert a strong influence in all the states and territories in the Rocky Mountains, by our votes, our numbers and our strength; and we will insure the respect of other states and communities. Although they may affect to despise us, and point the finger of scorn at and deride us, because of our independence of thought and character, and because we are disposed to establish and maintain our domestic institutions as God commands us, and not to be dictated by Methodists nor Baptists nor Presbyterians nor Catholics; although I say, they may feel disposed to point the finger of scorn at us, by and by their scoffing will be turned into mourning, and they will call loudly for our help to come and save them. Many of them will perish in their wickedness, because they will have sinned away the day of grace, and the Lord will suffer them to go down to perdition because of their wickedness; but we will have power to win many that are worthy to be saved, even many of them that look upon us as poor, despised people. But they know not the thoughts of God, nor do they know the work that He has commenced in the earth; but we know, and that He is moving in His own mysterious way His wonders to perform, and the gathering of His people into this great interior country of North America, is a grand design to bring to pass His purposes which have

been spoken of by the prophets to establish a nucleus for the Saints from all of the surrounding countries and nations, and where He will establish His name, and where He requires us to build temples, and where He will establish His law and His government, His Priesthood and the keys and ordinances thereof, even the ordinances for the redemption of the living and the dead.

Now, my brethren and sisters, I pray that your little settlement may be blessed of the Lord; that your labors may be crowned with success; that when you labor you may labor in faith; that when you sow seed you may do it as unto the Lord, dedicating it unto Him and asking His blessing upon it, that it may be fruitful for your sustenance and comfort; and that you may ask in faith His blessing upon your flocks and herds, as well as upon your little ones that are intrusted to your care. And inasmuch as you walk uprightly before Him, you will realize His blessings upon you and yours; they will come upon you from week to week, from month to month, and from year to year. And the elements will be tempered for your good, and the climate will be modified not only here, but in like places wherever the feet of the Saints shall tread the soil inasmuch as they consecrate themselves to the God of Israel, there His blessing will rest, this blessing will rest upon the land, and the elements which His people make use of, and upon them and their children. He has commanded His blessing upon Israel in these days; He is moving upon His servants who bear the holy Priesthood, to bless not only the people, but the land and the elements, and the Lord confirms their blessing upon the people and their possessions. And it is your privilege, brethren and sisters, all of you, to put forth your hands and receive and enjoy those blessings; it is your privilege to lay your hands upon the sick among you and upon your own sick and bless them, and rebuke disease, and ask God to heal them; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, even your prayers, my dear sisters and brethren. It is a promise to you as well as to the first Elders of the Church, the promise is not withheld from you; it is the privilege of every one to believe and to claim the blessings of heaven upon ourselves and upon our children, and the privilege of every brother to claim blessings upon his household, and upon his labor, and upon all his substance. But God expects to have you seek unto Him in prayer; He will be sought unto. He commands us that we should pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. He does not mean that we should always be on our knees praying and neglecting our daily duties. We can pray when at work in the fields or the canons; the sincere desire of the heart is a prayer to the Lord, whether it be uttered or unexpressed; He knows our inmost thoughts. There is a spirit in union with our spirits that makes all things known unto the Father pertaining to us, and that spirit will also make known the things of the Father to us, if we will seek its acquaintance, and when it speaks to us, let us listen to its whisperings; watch its impressions and study it as the telegraph operator studies his instruments in learning telegraphy. He watches the strokes of the instrument, he marks the measure and length of them; he learns the distinctive character of every sound, and he learns to read and understand them, as the ordinary schoolboy does his alphabet. Now the voice of the spirit may be read and understood in the same way; the whisperings of the Holy Spirit to us, and its impressions upon us may be learned and understood as the telegraph operator learns the talking of his instrument. It is something to be learned, it is something to be sought after, and is by earnest desiring and inquiry after and living for on the principles of righteousness that we come to know it. And when once we obtain it, if we will give heed to its whisperings it will lead us into all truth, and it will deliver us from the power of Satan, and it will help us to resist temptation, and if there is danger in our path it will show us how to escape it, and it will help us when we need help under all circumstances, and come to our relief in times of necessity; it will answer our prayers and teach us how to pray, and it will make known unto us the mind and will of God concerning us, and what He is willing to give unto us; and it will prompt us to pray and to ask for those things