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DISCOURSE

Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, January 16, 1898, by

DR. J. M. REINER.

(Roman Catholic.) of New York, with

REMARKS

BY

ELDER CHARLES W. PENROSE

AND

PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

Elder C. W. Penrose, at the request of Dr. Reiner, read the 24th chapter of Numbers.

Dr. J. M. Reiner then spoke as follows:

"How beautiful are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"

Thus spoke the false prophet when he went up on a mountain and looked down into the valley. If you could have followed the eye of that prophet you would have seen a valley where perpetual summer reigned. Many a tent was pitched there in the wilderness. Israel, by the direction of Jehovah, going through the wilderness, had taken a resting place there for a while. Everything was peaceful. Everything was united. God's benedictions smiled upon them. They went in and out of their tents, doing their daily duties, by the word and direction of their great leader. As you looked down into that valley, you would have been cheered and edified to see a people, going in the wilderness, amid many deprivations, hardships and troubles, and yet peaceful, contented and hopeful. While that went on in the valley there was a conspiracy going on. Balak hired a false prophet to curse the people of Israel. It is usually the case, whenever there is a curse to be uttered against the Church of God, it is not by a man who is indignant against any false teaching or false living, but it is always an enemy who has been bribed, bought, his eyes shut, his heart corrupted, and led against his own will and wish and conviction to utter a curse. Balaam was not willing to do it. He told the messengers of Balak that it was impossible for him to undertake that mission, because he could do nothing unless he received the approval of Jehovah. But Balak had invented all sorts of machinations to induce him to do it. He was willing to build altars; he was willing to bring sacrifices; he was willing to bribe that prophet, in order to accomplish his purposes against an innocent people. Balaam goes up and looks down into the valley. Instead of uttering a curse he utters a benediction. He begins with these words:

"How beautiful are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"

What do you think, my brethren. Balaam saw when he uttered that benediction in these words? He saw a people, to begin with, that were all

united. There was no strife in sight. All of them were directed by one God. All of them looked toward God to give them direction what they should do. All of them knew that they had the laws which Moses gave them on Sinai—given by God, and not by man. He—Jehovah himself—was their lawgiver. There was no question as to whether or not these laws were proper; there was no question as to whether or not these laws were popular; they were divine, and that was sufficient. Balaam looked down, and he saw more than that. He well remembered that God said to them "I will make of thee a kingly priesthood, and a sanctified, a holy nation." They were united; God was their lawgiver; and they were holy. He also knew that God gave His promise to Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Balaam well remembered that this nation, now wandering through the wilderness, forsaken and a prey to every enemy, was to be the nation out of which should come the Messiah, the Redeemer of the universe, our Divine Master, Jesus Christ himself. How could he pronounce a curse upon such a people? How was it possible, where God has stamped His seal of approval upon it, where God has been the director and the very soul of that movement, that he should utter a curse? Nay, he could not do it. He tried his best; he was induced and bribed; but as he looked down into the valley he uttered the words that I have already repeated, "How beautiful are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"

This was not only the case, my brethren, with the ancient people of Israel; but as we follow along in history we find afterwards, in the fulness of time; after four thousand years of waiting; after the human race was trembling in the balance; after great philosophers were confused and perplexed; after Israel were singing, through their prophets, many a song of the coming Messiah; after all the nations were anxiously waiting for somebody to come who would clear away the mists which rested upon the human race, who would explain how men could be delivered from sin and from iniquity—after four thousand years God sent His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the world. When He sent His Son upon earth it was not merely as a High Priest; it was not merely as a model lecturer—it was more than that: Christ came upon the earth with a revelation from the bosom of His Father, to deliver to the whole human race. And then and there He established a Church upon the earth. He established in His Church Apostles, evangelists; He ordained some as Teachers, others as Prophets. There was a complete, full organization, equipped so that they might go out into the world and proclaim the glad tidings of the Messiah who had come. In that Church you find the same thing. From time to time there was a hired, wicked man who was led on to curse the Church. Many an enemy surrounded the Church of God. A thousand times

did she lay before the altar of God, crying aloud in anguish. "O Lord, have mercy upon me," because the enemies had surrounded her, and she felt that one curse upon the other was ready to be pronounced upon her. But she came out victorious. Why? Because the Church of God, in the early ages, was a Church that was united; it was a Church that was sanctified; it was a Church ready to spread the Gospel all over the world; and such a Church certainly could not be conquered. And Jehovah gave the promise, through His only Son, that even the gates of hell "shall not prevail against thee."

Now, my brethren, let me tell you that when we speak of unity in the Church, we do not mean by that something which is fabricated. You cannot fabricate unity in a church. Israel was united. Why? There was one Lawgiver; there was one High Priest; there was one leader—Moses. They knew what God demanded of them; they knew their duties; they knew where to go for counsel; they knew where to ask for advice; they knew that where there was a sick man the sick man went to the High Priest to be cleansed. Even in the time of our Lord, Christ said, after He had cured many a leper, "Go and show thyself to the Priest." There was a bond of union, because God Himself had created it. They were sanctified; not sanctified merely in language, not by a fabrication, but they were sanctified because the law of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if followed out, if lived out, could make of them holy men and women. They were a people that could withstand all attacks from without. Why? Because they had the power of God in their midst. That is—that was—the Church of God. That was the Church which Jesus Christ established upon the earth.

Let me be frank with you, my brethren. It would do no good if I were not. I feel, as I stand here to address you, that I stand in a holy place. Christ has told us, where two or three are gathered together in His name He will be in their midst. I said this was a Church of God. You might misunderstand me, and think that I am a Mormon. I were a hypocrite if I were to say that. Of course, according to my own belief, there is one church that makes that claim. But what I mean to say to you is this: Here is the Mormon Church. Here is another tabernacle. Here also an Israel has spread and pitched its tents. And to my mind, your Church and the Roman church are the only two churches in the world today, that make any real claim to Christianity. I understand that a little while ago some ecclesiastical gentlemen in this city passed a resolution as to whether or not the Mormons are Christians—as if you might pass resolutions to say that a man's color shall change over night! You might as well pass a resolution that a colored man shall become white, and a white man shall become colored, as to pass a resolution that a people be not Christians who bow their heads before Christ and who stand up and say, "We are the