

COMING OF CHRIST IS NEAR.

Discourse delivered at the General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, October 7, 1900, by
PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON.

Preparation Needed for the Event—The Church Led Continuously by Revelation—Work of Warning the Nations—Benefits of Prosecuting the Ministry Without Purse or Scrip—The Gospel Should be Carried to Many Nations Not Yet Warned.

In looking at this congregation and thinking that I might have to speak to it, a great fear has come over me, and I feel as though I never was weaker in my life or had more dread of speaking. The spirit of God has been here and has rested upon the brethren who have spoken, and it seems as if every-thing has been said that is necessary to enlighten, to strengthen and to build up the members of this Church. In the remarks that I shall make I trust that I shall have the Spirit of God also, as well as your faith and prayers, that what I say may be dictated by the Spirit and be of profit to all of us. In my public ministry I have never felt satisfied unless I was instructed and edified myself in the remarks which I made, and generally I have been more strengthened and edified by my own remarks than perhaps any member of this congregation has. I think this should be the case. I believe all speakers, when they speak by the Spirit of God, are edified by the Spirit of God which rests upon them.

I have had resting upon my mind now for some time a feeling to call upon the Latter-day Saints and tell them that the coming of the Lord is near, even at our doors. I have been greatly im-pressed with this feeling. I know that Jesus is coming, and I feel that, as a people and as individuals, we ought to prepare for His coming. It ought to be our study every day how we can best prepare for His coming. While the angels themselves do not know when He will come, yet God does know, and we know also, for God has revealed it to us—that Jesus will come, and He will come suddenly, when the world is unprepared for Him, and when He will be least expected by the inhabitants of the earth, and perhaps be us. He commands us to be "looking forth for the coming of the Son of man." He cometh in an hour you think not. There may be many of us, and I hope there will be, who will be prepared for that great and glorious event.

In view of the certainty of His coming, I think it is our duty to prepare for it by every means in our power. The Lord has revealed unto us that which He wants us to do, and though we do not receive written revelations (the men who have held the keys have not always felt led to write revelations, as the Prophet Joseph did), the ser-vants of the Lord do receive revelations, and they are as binding upon the people as though they were printed and published throughout all the Stakes of Zion. The oracles of God are here, and He speaks through His servant whom He has chosen to hold the keys. He gives revelations to the men who are called to minister, but it is reserved for one man and one man alone at a time, to give revelations to the Church. We have been blessed as a people with an abundance of revela-tion. Some have deceived them-selves with the idea that because reve-lations have not been written and pub-lished, therefore there has been a less-ening of power in the Church of Christ. This is a very great mistake, as we will find out some day later. This Church has been continually led by the spirit of revelation. The spirit of revelation has been here in our conference. The addresses that have been delivered have been made under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and they are the word of God unto this people, binding upon them, and they will be judged by these words that we have heard. If we do not listen to these instructions and counsels and abide by the word of God as it is given to us from time to time, we shall be held to a strict account-ability.

If it be true, as I testify it is, that the coming of the Lord is not far dis-tant, ought we not as a people and as individuals to prepare ourselves by lis-tening to the instructions that we re-ceive, and putting our households and all our affairs in the place which the Lord should come suddenly upon us, we should be prepared for His com-ing? We should see to it that nothing is left undone by us, no commandment unfulfilled, no counsel or instruction dis-regarded, but that our lives and the lives of our families as far as we can control them, are brought into such a condition as to be prepared for that glorious event that we shall have all our lamps and the lamps trimmed and burning, that when we lay down at night, if the Lord should come, as He has said He would, like a thief in the night, we would not be unprepared for His coming.

Many who are now within the sound of my voice have been promised that they shall live, if they have faith, to behold the second coming of the Lord. The Lord has also promised that certain events shall take place, which are stand-ing in the generation in which these promises were made will yet be alive. All these promises go to show that it is not wise for us to put off the day of preparation and come to the Lord in the direction, I am amazed at those who have been promised that they shall live, and yet they have not been prepared for the coming of the Lord, and for one I want to do all in my power to perform the part that is allotted to me. I desire, my brethren and sisters, that when the Lord comes our garments shall be clean and unstained from the blood of this generation, that we shall not have left undone anything that God has commanded us to do in connection with the generation in which we live.

We have been laboring as a people and as individuals with a good deal of zeal and devotion. Elders have gone forth and have spent the best years of their lives in preaching the word of the Lord to the people. We have sent to foreign lands and have brought those who have embraced the Gospel to Zion. I think of the labors of this peo-ple in this direction. How willing the Elders have been to go and spend their means to save the inhabitants of the earth. There is nothing like it in his-tory, that I know anything about. In this respect we have been indefatigable. Nevertheless, there is a great deal to be done. I believe many of the Latter-day Saints have shown more of a disposition to save their souls than they have to save themselves. This class has been more willing to do that which is neces-sary to save the souls of the children of men than they have been willing to save their own souls. They have been careless and indifferent concerning the salvation of themselves and their families. Presi-dent Young used to say that there were many men that were willing to die for their religion who would not live for it. So there are many men willing to make great sacrifices for the salvation of others who are apparently indifferent about that which is necessary for their

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But now our Elders go and spend their own money, and people in some cases will not feel and entertain them. Of course, I believe there are many places where the people, but especially the saints, are exceedingly kind to the Elders, and while there may be some exceptions there are very good people being gathered out now.

In this land of ours, what warnings there have been! The blood of the martyrs shed upon this soil is crying to God. The expulsion of the Saints from Ohio, the expulsion from Jackson county, from Clay county, from Caldwell county, in Missouri, and from Illinois, are they not testimonies? I take it that they are, and God will hold them as testimonies against the guilty men and women who have done these things, as well as against those who have never lifted their hands or their voices to re-dress any wrong that has been prac-ticed upon the Latter-day Saints. Then since we came to these mountains, this whole nation has been doing all that we can to prepare ourselves for it. We are not groping as blind men to find the path, for the Lord has made the path plain before us. We are not in the dark, but we are in the light, and we should exercise faith in God and bethink Him contin-ually to give unto us the strength and grace necessary to perform the labors that have to be done in order to prepare ourselves as we should.

There is one labor that has rested up-on my mind with great weight for some time. I have looked at the nations of the earth and have examined somewhat into the labors of our Elders. We have about eighteen hundred Elders preach-ing the Gospel in various places, and they are doing the work most thor-oughly. Men and women have gone forth and have spent their time with the great-est pleasure, forsaking home, leaving business, and devoting themselves for years to the warning of the people con-cerning the calamities that the Lord is about to pour out upon the nations of the earth. Both men and women are doing this work with all diligence and faithfulness, and are following a two-fold course concerning a young lady who is out in the ministry. Her brother has just returned from a mission. In coming from his mission he had called upon her and they had visited some places to-gether. She asked her parents why she did not return with her brother. They said she did not want to return. She has only been out eighteen months, she is busily engaged in the work of the Lord, and she feels desirous to complete her mission before she returns home. This spirit is on our sisters, as well as on our Elders, and they do all in their power to warn the people, until in some lands and some cities there is scarcely a house in which there is not a man or woman who has had a tract delivered to it.

According to the last report received from Great Britain, two hundred and seventy-four Elders are laboring in that land, with faithful-ness and assiduity, spending time and means and in a certain sense wearing themselves out in order to deliver the message of salvation that God has com-mitted to them. This work has now been going on for upwards of sixty years, and there is scarcely an ear that has not heard the message.

Concerning the missions in this coun-try, this land has been warned now for seventy years. God commanded the Elders in early days to warn the peo-ple, and away back in Kirtland and Missouri He said that the leading El-ders of the Church had done their duty, and there was none of the blood of this generation upon their garments, but those who had not labored as they had done were to continue in the field until it could also be said of them that their garments were clean from the blood of this generation. In that early day the Lord spoke in this manner. On one oc-casion He said: "Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned, to warn his neighbor."

"Therefore they are left without ex-cuse, and their sins are upon their own heads."

The Lord appeared to be determined to cut his work short in righteousness. I do not wish to detract from the labors of the Elders in our own land, but this land has been warned. I feel that we can stand before the judgment seat of our great Creator free from the blood of this generation in these United States. It is true, we have not told every man, woman and child about these things. God requires us to preach His Gospel and to warn the inhabitants of all lands, and then if they do not take warning and warn their neighbors, their sins rest upon their own heads, and our garments are clean.

How long has this great work which God has established been a theme for newspaper writers? Ever since we came to this country they have known about us, they have had thousands of testi-monies borne to them concerning this work, they have seen it grow and spread; they have seen and heard of our Elders traveling through the cities and visiting foreign lands; and now the warning voice of the judgments of God is following the testimony of the Elders. As far back as December, 1832, the Lord said:

"And after your testimony cometh words and faith shall be upon the people." "For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground, and shall not be able to stand." "And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea, heaving themselves beyond their bounds."

All things shall be in commo-tion, and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all peo-ple."

The Lord's judgments are following the warning voice that has been raised to the Elders of this Church. If an- other Elder did not lift his voice, and if another tract were not distributed in this land of ours, the Elders have done their duty, and this nation cannot in the day of judgment rise up against the Elders of this Church and say that they did not bear testimony to them con-cerning this work. I am now telling you my own views. Our Elders spend two years or more in the missionary field, and they baptize on an average not exceeding four souls, or about two a year. I would not dare to tell you how much money is spent as well as time to do this.

I will tell you another thing connected with this inasmuch as it occurs to my mind. Many of those who are brought into the Church under the present sys-tem of preaching with purse and with scrip, instead of without purse and without scrip, have not the faith to stand as they would have if they en-tertained the Elders and furnished them with what they needed, as God has commanded. I do not believe we are getting so good a class of converts under this system as under the old sys-tem which was followed by the early Elders of this Church. Our converts showed their faith by feeding and clothing the Elders and by giving them money when necessary. By taking this course they proved themselves to be the disciples of the Son of God, for the Lord says:

"Whoso receiveth me, receiveth me, and the same will feed you, and clothe you, and give you money."

and these lands be penetrated by the people in all lands, and in many coun-tries they are waiting in solemn antici-pation of what is going to happen. All the nations of the earth feel that some-thing remarkable is likely to happen, but they do not know what. The Jews in heart in those lands when they hear the glad tidings that God has pro-vided a refuge to which they can flee. He did in the days of Noah, which is what we are doing now. God has founded this land and the government for the express purpose that Zion might be built upon this land, and that the people of all nations might come here seeking His blessing and seeking Him in their distress and the threatening evils by which they are surround-ed. He has provided a way of escape, a safe place, that when calamities and judgments come upon the inhabitants of the earth, they can stand in holy places and be secure by keeping the commandments of God. What a glorious theme this is for the Elders to car-ry to the down-trodden of the nations of the earth who groan in darkness and who are in the way of deliverance! Nor will it be the down-trodden alone who will listen to these tidings. Men in high places and of commanding positions will yet listen to them, and they will take note of this extraordinary people who have done such a remarkable work and who are now traversing the globe to bring from every land all who will listen to their message, to bring them to the habitation of this place which we call Zion, where they can, by the saving power of the Spirit of God, be consolidated into one united people. It is already the most wonderful thing that has ever taken place upon the earth, but if we will do our duty on the lines that I have been speaking, how much more influence will we have and how much more will our God be glorified! The world will see and wonder at what is done by those who are laboring in the Lord's name, without taking any credit to themselves, but ascribing all power and success to Him and His Holy Spirit. These will be additional testi-monies to the inhabitants of the earth that God is in this great movement, and that He is preparing the way, as the prophets have predicted, for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Before closing, I wish to say, my brethren and sisters, I hope you will take these things to heart and prepare yourselves. If you are not living as you should do, regulate your households and strive to live according to the com-mandments of God and the counsels of

His servants. Bring your lives into complete subjection to the will of God. If there is anything in you or in your families that is not in accordance with the law of God, divest yourselves of it as fast as you can by faith and prayer. Let us be a holy people. Oh! when I hear the brethren spending time talking about the Word of Wisdom, I feel to say, are we still little children that we have to be talked to in this way meeting after meeting? It is disgrace-ful that a people who know as much as we do should have to be talked to about these little habits concerning which God has spoken so plainly. The law of tithing ought to be so understood that every man, woman and child would obey it gladly, for it is accompanied by great promises, and it will secure the way for greater things, as President Snow has told us.

I pray God that that which has been said during this conference may sink deep into all our hearts. I pray God to bless you that, to be with you, to fill you with the Holy Ghost, to preserve your lives, to preserve your generations, that you yourselves or some of your pos-terity, if you should happen to pass away before that time, may be sit-tered among the Saints of God who shall enter into that millennial glory which is prepared for the faithful, and that none of us may ever be destitute of a man of men to stand before the Lord, bearing the Holy Priesthood, throughout all the generations to come, until time shall be no more, which is my prayer for you all and for myself, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

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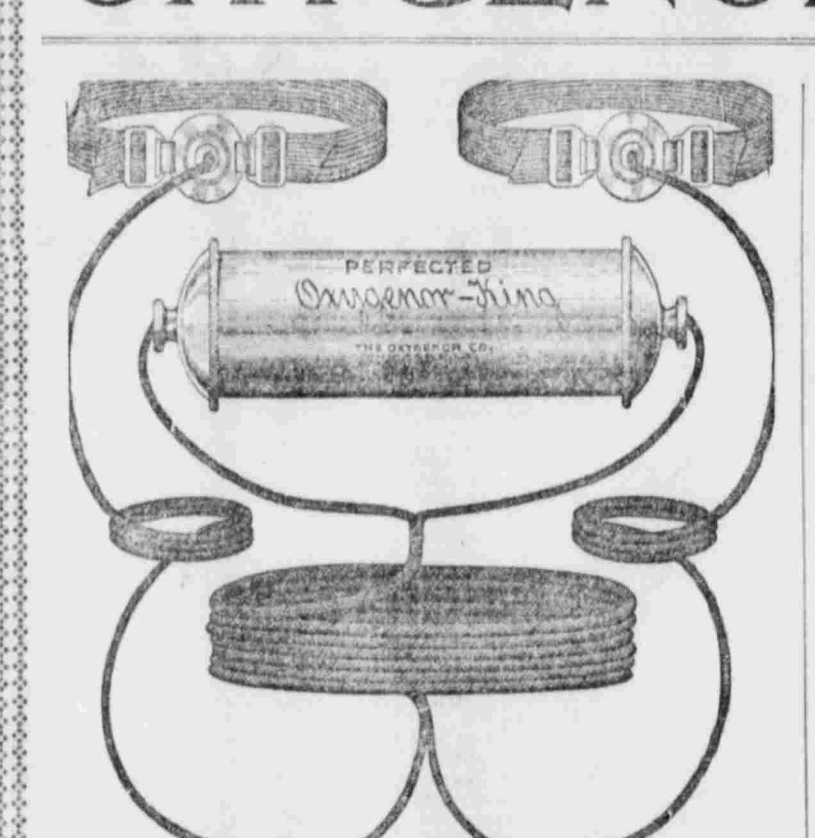
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