

DISCOURSE

BY ELDER ORSON PRATT,

DELIVERED

In the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, Sept. 8th, 1874.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

[The speaker read the 5th and four following verses of the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.]

The passage which I have selected, and from which I intend to make a few remarks, will be found in the sixth verse of the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles—“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? The apostles were expecting in those days that a temporal kingdom, or in other language, a kingdom, established here on the earth, was to be introduced in their day, and that Israel were to be the prominent people, the immediate citizens of the kingdom, and they looked upon their Savior as the great king that had been promised through the Holy Ghost by the mouths of holy prophets in former ages of the world. They understood, from the sayings of many of these prophets, that a king should arise who should be a descendant of David, according to the flesh, and that he would restore the kingdom again to the house of Israel, that they might become the principal people, the head, a people that should be peculiarly honored in the sight of the Lord, and that he would reign over them and over all people, and that the headquarters of this kingdom were to be in Jerusalem in Palestine. They understood also from the prophets, that before this restoration should take place calamity should befall the house of Israel because of wickedness; they understood that already ten tribes of that people had been carried away by their enemies, and that at that time they were lost from the knowledge of the people, deprived of their godly inheritance for seven hundred years, and upwards, having been carried away by Sennacherib, King of Assyria; and where those ten tribes were located they knew not. The two tribes, or, as they are sometimes called, the two and a half tribes, in which were included the tribe of Judah, the tribe of Levi, and a few individuals from the other tribes, still occupied Palestine. The Jewish nation had already been brought into captivity and bondage to the Roman power, and these apostles were exceedingly anxious that there might be a redemption or deliverance from these earthly tyrants and that Israel might be free, and that their king might proceed from their midst, and instead of being subject to a foreign power that they might become the especial and favored citizens and people of the most high.

This seems to have been the view of the Apostles from the time of the commencement of their ministry until the time of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and also after his resurrection, knowing that a power was given into his hands, both in heaven and on earth, and believing him to be the person who had been predicted by the mouths of the prophets, having no doubts on this subject they were very earnest in their supplications that, as that time the Lord would proceed to perform that which had been predicted by the mouth of the prophets, namely, that he would restore to Israel the promised kingdom. But Jesus did not see proper on that occasion to give them the full particulars, but answered their question by saying unto them—“It is not given for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” Jesus, knowing all things, understood very well that there was a definite period in the mind of his Father in relation to this great restitution of the kingdom to Israel, and he understood perfectly the great events that were to precede that restitution. It seems that he had told them on former occasions some of these events, but they did not seem to comprehend his sayings. Their minds were so swayed up in relation to the restitution of that kingdom, and with the idea that they would be crowned as kings under their Messiah and occupy a high position in the midst of Israel, that all the sayings of Jesus in relation to the long period that was to elapse before the kingdom should be restored to Israel, seem to have been misunderstood by the Apostles. On one occasion we find Jesus telling them some of the great events that were to transpire before the kingdom should be given to them, as you will find recorded in the 21st chapter of Luke. After having shown them concerning the magnificence of the temple, Jesus informed them that the days would come when not one stone of that building should be left on another, and that there should be great distress in that land, that is upon the Jewish nation. They should be destroyed by the edge of the sword, and scattered among all the nations of the earth, and that Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. They did not seem to comprehend this saying, notwithstanding its plainness, that that generation of Jews were to suffer, that their magnificent buildings were to be thrown down; that Jerusalem was to be brought into captivity; that a great portion of their nation was to be devoured by the sword, and that a few should be scattered among all the nations of the earth, and that the city where their nation had so long worshipped was to come into the possession of a foreign power—trodden down by the Gentiles—and that the captivity of their holy city was to continue until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled.

One would almost suppose that the Apostles, reflecting upon these subjects, would not have troubled Jesus with this

question, just before his ascension into heaven; but they were also blind in relation to many other sayings of Jesus. Jesus often referred them to his death, and said that all things that were written by the prophets must be fulfilled; that the Son of man must be taken and delivered into the hands of his enemies, and be put to death, and on the third day should rise again. But we are informed that they understood not his sayings, and they feared to ask him, it was so contrary to their expectations that all these things should happen, for they were but mortal men, and although Jesus had condescended to call them to be his servants and his apostles, to stand at the head of the ministry, to see that the gospel was preached to all the nations and kingdoms of the earth, yet it seems that they were poor, unlearned, ignorant fishermen, at the time Jesus delivered these sayings; hence, they did not comprehend them. On one occasion he upbraided them for their unbelief. This was after his resurrection when he appeared to and walked with two of his disciples. They were mourning over the events that had transpired in Jerusalem, concerning the putting to death of him whom they believed to be the Messiah; they were mourning almost without hope. Jesus travelled along like a stranger and reasoned with them out of the prophets, and he said unto them—“Oh fools, how is it that you can not understand the sayings and things that are spoken by the mouths of the prophets, how that Jesus was to suffer these things before he entered into his glory? And when they went into an inn to tarry for the night, he made as though he would pass on, but they entreated him, and he went in and sat down to supper with them, and he brake bread and blessed it, and immediately he was known to them, and he vanished out of their sight. Thus we see the unbelief and blindness of mind and hardness of heart and ignorance of these men of God, until they were inspired by the Holy Ghost, which was given to them after the ascension of Christ into heaven.

At this late period of the world, it is very proper for us to put a question of this kind to the Lord, if we have access to him, very proper indeed for us to enquire of the Lord, wilt thou not at this time, after almost nineteen centuries have passed away since the crucifixion, wilt thou not even now restore again the kingdom to Israel? It seems that the Lord has within his own power a certain definite period in which he will accomplish his great purposes which were spoken of by the mouth of the ancient prophets. Let us enquire, this afternoon, how this great work for the restitution of the kingdom to Israel is to be commenced, how it is to progress on the earth, and when, at what period of time, this must be fulfilled. It was not fulfilled in former times, from the fact that Jerusalem is still trodden down by the Gentiles. The times of the Gentiles are not yet fulfilled, for if they were, the land of Palestine would be delivered from their power, and would be occupied by the ancient covenant people of God. What great work, therefore, must commence on the earth that shall bring in thefulness of the Gentiles and, after that, fulfill their times? A new dispensation; nothing short of a new dispensation can commence this great later-day work for the restitution of Israel.

“Oh,” says one, “we have a dispensation of the gospel, introduced by our Lord and Savior, and which has spread forth among all the nations and kingdoms of the earth, and we are not to expect any new dispensation.” Well then, if we are not to expect this we might as well close up the Bible and lay it aside and put no more confidence in it; for it tells us clearly and plainly that there is to be another dispensation, after the dispensation that was introduced in the days of the Apostles. The Apostles themselves refer to it. The Apostle Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, says “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he will gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” It seems then that the Apostle Paul, at least, foresaw that there was to be a dispensation of gathering, a new dispensation, one in which all that were in Christ should be gathered in one; not only those that were on earth, but all those in Christ in the heavens, were all to be assembled in one general body of people; and the period in which this should take place is called the dispensation of thefulness of times.

Will that dispensation differ from the ancient dispensation of the gospel? It will in many respects; but so far as the plan of salvation is concerned, so far as the gospel of the Son of God, which is called the everlasting gospel, is concerned, there will be no difference. But in the dispensation of thefulness of times there will be events not characterizing former dispensations. There will be something very different in that dispensation from what took place in the days of the Apostles. Then the Saints were not gathered together in one, but in the dispensation of thefulness of times we may look for a general gathering into one place of all the heavenly hosts, preparatory to the fulfillment of the great and glorious promises spoken of by the prophets.

Our Lord and Savior, in the 24th chapter of Matthew, in answering two special questions that were asked of him by his apostles, referred to the signs of his second coming, among which he says, “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.” That is one of the signs that is to precede the second advent of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven. Now, the gospel of the kingdom that was preached in that day, we are informed, was preached to every creature in all the world before the death of the Apostles, and yet the end did not come. Paul, in speaking of this same gospel, says—“This gospel was preached

to every creature in all the world, whereof I, Paul, am made a minister.” It had been circulated, sent forth and published so that the inhabitants of all nations had had an opportunity to hear it, for the Apostle speaks of it in the past tense, yet the end did not come. But when this gospel shall be again preached the second time as a witness unto all the nations there will be connected with it the proclamations—“Behold the Bridegroom cometh,” “the hour of his judgment is come,” &c. There will be a difference then between the ancient preaching of the gospel, and the preaching of it in the great and last dispensation of thefulness of times. One was to gather as many as possible into the church among all the people and kingdoms of the earth before the great falling away should come, and the other was, not only to gather them into the church, but to gather them out from the four winds of heaven unto one place preparatory to the coming of the Son of man. The preaching of the ancient gospel was not characterized by the eventful hour, the hour of his judgment; the preaching of the gospel in the last dispensation is to be characterized with some of the most tremendous judgments that have ever been poured forth upon the nations, it is especially called the hour of God’s judgment. Moreover, the gospel that was introduced in that dispensation was introduced by the personal ministry of our Lord and Savior himself; but the gospel that is to be introduced in the last dispensation, preparatory to the great events which are to precede the coming of the Son of Man, is to be sent from heaven by the ministration of “another angel.” The introduction and preaching, therefore, in the two dispensations, are quite different in regard to the events which are to happen. Read the declaration of John, ninety-six years after Christ, which he received on the Isle of Patmos. Before he received that revelation, it seems according to the testimony of Paul, who was then dead, that the gospel had been preached among all people. But John saw things which must come hereafter, having the vision of heaven opened to him, and he was caught up, whether in the body or out of the body we do not know, but he was caught up, and saw things that must soon come to pass. And as the vision of heaven rolled forth before his mind, he saw the falling away of the church that had been built up in his day; he saw that church become corrupted, and another distinct power arise that made war with and overcame the Saints. He saw that that great ecclesiastical power that should arise should make all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and that all people would sip, as it were, out of her golden cup, her filthiness and uncleanness.

After he had seen this falling away and the destruction of the Saints by this power, he then gazes forward into the future, and beholds an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having something of importance. What was it? “Having the everlasting gospel to be preached to every nation and kindred, and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice—Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come.” Another dispensation, then, entirely distinct from the one in which he was engaged, a gospel that was to be committed by an angel sent from heaven; a gospel that was to be committed not for the benefit of a few individuals on the earth, but for all people, nations, kindreds and tongues.

Says one, “Oh, we have the gospel here in the United States and among the Christian nations of Europe.” Have you in deed? Have you ready got the gospel? Have you got the power to administer its ordinances? Have you the right to stand forth in the water and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost? Have you the power to lay hands on your baptized believers in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost descend upon them, and they be baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost? If you have not this power to administer, the letter of the gospel can do you no particular good in a church capacity. You may hear the gospel but you cannot receive its ordinances without a divinely inspired ministry. When that power made war upon the Saints in ancient days, it overcame them, and they were killed off from the face of the earth, and then the apostleship and priesthood ceased; divine authority, so far as the ministrations of ordinances were concerned, also ceased, and from that day to this, some sixteen or seventeen centuries, no person among all the Christian nations has had divine authority and power to administer the ordinances of the gospel. People, to be sure, could read the history of that gospel; they could read how it was preached in ancient days; they could read about ancient baptism, and about ancient confirmation by the laying on of hands; they could read about the administration of the Lord’s Supper, but what good does it do to read about these things, unless there are men on the earth who have power to administer them acceptably in the sight of heaven? You might as well say to a hungry congregation, that had been fasting several days—“Are you hungry, have you great appetite?” “Oh yes,” say they, “we have fasted for several days and are ready to faint.” “Well, read the Bible.” “Is there anything in the Bible that will give us food?” “Oh yes, read how Jesus feasted the five thousand on a few loaves and fishes, and let your appetites be satisfied.” Now how long would it take to satiate their appetites by reading the account of what Jesus did, what divine authority did eighteen hundred years ago? Would not such a congregation be very likely to say to the preacher—“Bring forth a your loaves and fishes that we may have something on which to feast!” Well, with the same propriety may the Christian teachers of the day tell believers, when they enquire who has authority to administer the ordinances of the gospel, to read, read, read, until they are satisfied.

This has been the condition of the nations for many long centuries past; and this being the case a new dispensation is wanted, and it is promised, and not only promised, but the very medium through which the gospel is again to be communicated to the inhabitants of the earth is foretold. “I will send another angel.” John saw him fly, having the everlasting gospel. Not a new gospel, but the same that was preached in former dispensations was again to be committed to the inhabitants of the earth, to be preached in the latter dispensation. As it was preached to every creature in all the world in a former dispensation, so in a latter dispensation it is to be preached to every nation, kindred, tongue and people in the four quarters of the earth, accompanied with the proclamation—“Behold, the hour of God’s judgment is at hand.” That was not connected with the proclamation of the gospel in a former dispensation, but it came with the gospel restored by the angel in the last days, as seen by the Revelator John; and from the time that the angel came to the young man, Joseph Smith, the great prophet of the nineteenth century until the present time, the servants of God have been sent forth with divine authority to preach to the nations of the earth, and they have been commanded to accompany their message with the solemn proclamation that the hour of God’s judgment is come, preparing the way for the coming of the Son of Man; and when it is preached to all nations under heaven, behold the end will come, just as Jesus said it would in the 24th chapter of Matthew. But it is not yet preached to all people. By the direction of the Almighty the elders, for many long years, have lifted up their voices among all the different states of this Union, and also in the Canadas and British provinces on this land, proclaiming that God had sent forth his angel with the everlasting gospel, and that the hour of his judgment was come; and by the commandment of the Almighty, we have carried it forth from this continent across the great ocean, and travelled to and fro among the nations of Europe, and proclaimed the same everlasting gospel sent by the angel. We have carried this proclamation to the four quarters of the earth, but not to all the nations in the four quarters of the earth. We have published this in Hindostan, at the Cape of Good Hope and on the Islands of the Pacific, and in almost all the Christian nations. But there is one thing we have not done as yet. What is that? We have not carried it to the House of Israel, only as they have happened to hear it as we have preached it to the Gentile nations.

Says one—“Why don’t you carry it to the House of Israel?” Because that same God who sent his angel and revealed the everlasting gospel, contained in the Book of Mormon, gave commandment to his servants to go and publish these things, first to the Gentile nations, in order that their times might be fulfilled; that is the reason we have not yet been to Israel. Now let me quote another parallel passage relating to this same subject, found in the seventh chapter of Paul’s epistle to the Romans. In that chapter the apostle refers to the House of Israel and likens them to a tame olive tree. He tells us in that chapter that the Jews or Israelites were broken off through their unbelief, and says he, “you Gentiles”—for he was then addressing his epistle to the Gentiles—the Romans—“You have been grafted in by faith.” Then he gives a warning to the Gentiles, saying—“Be not arrogantly, but fear, for if God spared not the natural branches”—meaning the House of Israel—“Take heed lest he also spare not thee, for thou standest by faith. Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God: on them which fell”—meaning the House of Israel—“severity,” for they were cut off through unbelief; “but towards thee”—the Gentiles—“goodness, if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou shalt be cut off, and the natural branches”—meaning the House of Israel—“shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.”

Now don’t you see here, a warning, by the ancient apostle to the Gentile nations that were grafted in instead of Israel that had been cut off? “If thou continue in his goodness, it will be well with thee; but if thou dost not, thou also shalt be cut off, and they shall be grafted in again;” and then to impress this fact more fully upon their minds, he speaks to them in this language—“I would not brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part hath happened to the Jews, or to Israel, until thefulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved. As it is written, there shall come out of Zion a Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” Here then we find that he agrees with what Jesus said, as written in the 21st chapter of Luke. Blindness in part hath happened to Israel for a certain period of time. That time is represented as being, until thefulness of the Gentiles be come in, then, after theirfulness is come in, all Israel shall be saved; and then he tells them that a deliverer shall come out of Zion who shall turn away ungodliness from Israel or Jacob.

Now there must be something to fulfill the times of the Gentiles and to bring in theirfulness. What will it be? Nothing more nor less than that proclamation that has been predicted by the ancient inspired man of God—the everlasting gospel in all its beauty, glory,fulness power and ordinances, to be sent forth among all the people, nations, kindreds and tongues of the earth, proclaimed by the power and authority of God, that all people may be warned that the hour of God’s judgment is at hand, and that as many Gentiles as will repent and will receive that everlasting gospel may be gathered together in one in the great gathering dispensation, the dispensation of thefulness of times. Later-day Saints, why are you here in the mountains in the heart of North Amer-

ica? Because the angel has flown with the everlasting gospel; because the testimony of the servants of God reached your ears in the various nations from which you have gathered; because the voice of the Lord saluted you, commanding you to gather out from the midst of wickedness, from the midst of spiritual Babylon, which will fall.

Is there any prediction of this further than that which I have quoted in the first chapter of the Ephesians? Yes, read the testimony of John the Revelator, after the angel should bring the gospel and it should be preached to the nations of the earth. John says—“I heard a great voice from heaven saying, Come out of her, Oh my people, that you partake not of her sins, that you receive not of her plagues, for her sins have reached to the heavens and God has remembered her iniquities.” John foresaw this, and that is the reason why you are here. You came because you heard this voice from heaven. Remember, John did not say that he heard a great voice from among uninspired men, commanding the people to come out of Babylon—some scheme of men—but it was a voice from heaven, a commandment of the Almighty, calling upon the people who should receive the everlasting gospel, brought by the angel, to leave their native countries and gather together in one, according to the great work that should take place in the dispensation of thefulness of times. Hence you are gathered here, and the gathering will continue, and the work of preaching will continue, and we shall send forth our elders and missionaries to all the nations of the Gentiles as fast as we possibly can, as fast as the way opens; as fast as the governments which are opposed to religious liberty shall be overthrown and new governments shall arise and proclaim religious freedom and liberty, so fast will the Lord our God send forth the angelic proclamation, until it shall reach the ends of the earth among all the nations and kingdoms of the Gentiles. And when our proclamation to the Gentile nations is ended, then will come the winding up scene, so far as concerns the preservation of the Gentile nations, and then will be fulfilled to the very letter the sayings of Jesus and of the ancient prophets, that he will visit the earth, and that the slain of the Lord shall be many from one end of the earth to the other. Nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, empire against empire and republic against republic, until the whole earth will be in commotion, and fear will seize all people; and the times of the Gentiles being fulfilled the saying of Paul will also be fulfilled, that they shall be cut off and Israel shall be grafted in again, and all Israel will then be saved. Then we shall have a new proclamation to make, a new mission will be given to us. We shall not then be sent forth, as we have been during the last forty-four years, to preach to the Gentiles. The Lord will say, “Let your testimony be sealed and the law be bound up;” according to the testimony of Isaiah, so far as the Gentiles are concerned, “and let your testimony henceforth be to all the scattered remnants of the House of Israel in the four quarters of the earth.” Then will be fulfilled that which is written in the 16th chapter of Jeremiah—“Behold the days shall come when it shall be no more said the Lord dwelt that brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, but it shall be said the Lord lives that brought Israel from the north country and from all the countries whither he hath driven them out.” The miracles wrought in bringing them out of the land of Egypt will dwindle into insignificance compared with the latter-day miracles that will be wrought in taking them from the ends of the earth, and restoring them to their own land. Then will be the beginning of the fulfillment of the words of our text, or in other words an answer to the queries that were put to the Savior by the Apostles—“Wilt thou not at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” The Lord knew that it would not be done in their day, hence he said—“It is not given for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put into his own power.”

Now I have told you concerning what the Lord intends to do in this last dispensation, I have no doubt there are queries arising in the minds of some of my congregation something like this—How long must this gospel which you say an angel brought from heaven, be proclaimed among the Gentiles before theirfulness comes in, and their times are fulfilled, and they are cut off? This is a question that I cannot definitely answer, but I will answer it so far as the Lord hath given us knowledge. In this book of covenants is contained a series of revelations given by that prophet that God raised up in this last dispensation, to whom the angel appeared and committed the plates of the Book of Mormon, from which is translated the present English edition. This Book of Covenants contains many revelations, pertaining to the great events that are to take place in this dispensation. Now I will tell you what is said in this book in relation to the times of the Gentiles and their fulfillment. In a revelation given in 1831 the Lord said, in substance, the times of the Gentiles had then come in; and that in the generation in which the light began to break forth the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. This is as far as I know in relation to that matter. I know that light began to spring forth in the year 1830, and that forty-four years of the generation then in existence have passed away, but how many more it will be before the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and before the Lord will call in all his missionary servants from among the Gentiles, and give them a commission to go to the lossheep of the House of Israel, to gather them in, I do not know, but it will be before the generation all pass away that were living in 1830. In the same revelation it is also said that the Jews should remain scattered until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. From that revelation as well as from the 21st chapter of