

DISCOURSE

BY

Elder WILFORD WOODRUFF,

DELIVERED

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REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

I AM called upon to occupy a little time this morning, and I realize that I and my brethren are all dependent upon the Spirit of God to guide, dictate and direct us in all our public teachings, as well as in all other acts we are called upon to perform in the kingdom of God. The apostle says there is no prophecy of the Scripture which is of any private interpretation, but holy men of old spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost. The Lord has told us in some of the revelations which he has given in our day that all of his messengers or servants, his elders who are sent forth to teach, should speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and when they follow this counsel what they say, the Lord says, is Scripture, it is the mind and will of the Lord, it is the word of the Lord and it is the power of God unto salvation. "And this is an ensample unto you, even all my servants who go forth to declare the words of life unto the inhabitants of the earth."

Again, the Lord has said that it matters not whether it be by my own voice out of the heavens, whether it be by the administering of angels, or whether it be by the voice of my servants, it is all the same, and their words shall be fulfilled though the heavens and the earth pass away. This is the position which the prophets, apostles and patriarchs have occupied upon the earth in every age and dispensation. They have had to be governed by the Spirit of God; and when men are sent with a message, and they speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost, their words are the words of the Lord and they will be fulfilled.

We have had a good deal of teaching during this Conference from the servants of God, teachings given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. We occupy a very peculiar position on the earth, a position differing in many respects from any other dispensation to men. Paul says—"Though we or an angel from heaven preach unto you any other gospel than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." All the teachings of the patriarchs and prophets have shown us but one gospel. There is but one gospel, there never was but one and there never will be. The gospel revealed for the salvation of man is the same in every age of the world. Adam, our first great progenitor and father, after the fall, received this gospel, and he received the holy priesthood in all its power, and its keys and ordinances. He sealed these blessings upon his sons—Seth, Enos, Jared, Cainan, Mahaleel, Enoch and Methuselah. All these men received this high and holy priesthood. They all professed to give revelation. They all had inspiration and left their record on the earth; and not one of them but what saw and prophesied about the great Zion of God in the latter-days. And when we say this of them we say it of every apostle and prophet who ever lived upon the earth. Their revelations and prophecies all point to our day and that great kingdom of God which was spoken of by Daniel, that great Zion of God spoken of by Isaiah and Jeremiah; and that great gathering of the house of Israel spoken of by Ezekiel and Malachi and many of the ancient patriarchs and prophets.

When the Lord has attempted to perform a work on the earth there has been one peculiarity with him, and that is, the instruments which he has made use of have occupied a peculiar position in the world. He has generally chosen the weak things of the world to confound the wise, and things that were nought to bring to pass things which were. When he wanted a man to deliver Israel he called Moses, who was in an ark of bulrushes among the crocodiles and alligators of the river Nile, put there by his mother, a Hebrew woman, because Moses was her first born, and all the firstborn of the Hebrews had to be slain. The daughter of Pharaoh, through the providence of God, preserved Moses, and by her he was given to his mother to raise. When

called to deliver Israel Moses told the Lord that he was a man slow of speech. He did not feel qualified to perform so great a work, yet the Lord chose him, and he performed the work the Lord assigned him.

So when the Lord wanted a king for Israel and the lot fell upon the family of Jesse. The prophet went and called for the sons of Jesse to pick out this king. All the boys were brought before him except David. He was the smallest of the flock, and was out taking care of the sheep. Jesse never thought of him at all. He brought his other sons, who had been trained in all the arts, sciences and learning of the day, and when they came in Samuel could not see the one he wanted. He asked Jesse if he had not any more sons. Yes, he had a boy taking care of the sheep. "Let's see him," said the prophet; and when he came he was anointed king.

Jesus himself was born in a stable and cradled in a manger and traveled in poverty all the way through his life. When he chose his disciples he did not take the great, learned, rich and noble of that generation, but he chose fishermen, the most illiterate men and, in one sense of the word, we may say, almost the lowest calling among men in that day. They were the ones the Lord made use of to go forth to preach his gospel and to build up his kingdom on the earth.

How is it in our day, in this great and last dispensation? The Lord required an instrument who would take hold and work with him. He required some one to lay the foundation of this great church and kingdom who would be willing to step forth and be led in the channel that was according to the mind and will of God, a man who could not be swayed by the traditions and religions of the day. Whom did the Lord call? The patriarchs and prophets not only pointed out the Zion of God and the manner in which his church and kingdom should be established and built up, but they even called the name of the man who should be called to establish this work, and I do not know but the name of his father. His name was to be Joseph and he was to be a lineal descendant of ancient Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, separated from his brethren. The record or stick of Joseph in the hand of Ephraim, which Ezekiel speaks of, which was to be put with the record of the Jews in the last days, was to be an instrument in the hands of God of performing this great work or laying the foundation of this church, and the gathering of the twelve tribes of the house of Israel. In that record the man's name was pointed out as well as the work he was to do. Joseph Smith knew nothing of all this until after he was administered to by the angel of God; he had no knowledge of this when he brought forth that record to the world, and until he translated it, by the Urim and Thummim, into the English language. He had no knowledge whatever of this; but here was that great band, as strong as iron, that surrounded him by the revelations of God, for the last six thousand years, by every man who spoke of the work of God in the last days. These prophecies, revelations, and decrees of the Almighty, as it were, surrounded that man, and he had to be taught, not by man nor by the will of man, but he required the angels of God to come forth and teach him; it required the revelations of God to teach him, and he was taught for years by visions and revelations, and by holy angels sent from God out of heaven to teach and instruct him and prepare him to lay the foundation of this church.

As I before remarked, these prophecies surrounded him, forming, in one sense of the word, a band and a power he could not get out of. Why? Because no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, but holy men of old spoke as they were moved upon by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and when any of those prophets and patriarchs for the last six thousand years spoke, when wrapped in prophetic vision, of the Zion of God being established in the last dispensation, those decrees had to be fulfilled to the very letter.

When Joseph Smith received these revelations he was an illiterate boy, like David among the sheep. The Lord, in this day, did not choose one from among the great, mighty, rich or noble, but he chose one prepared from before the foundation of the world, to come forth in the last days, through the loins of ancient Joseph who, in the

hands of God, was the savior of the House of Israel and of the Egyptians in his day. This man was raised up in his proper time, and came forth into the world, and the Lord began to feel after him and to prepare him; but he, himself, did not know even when he laid the foundation of this work. The Lord told him—"you will lay the foundation of a great work, but you know it not." Joseph himself could not comprehend, unless he was wrapped in the visions of eternity, the importance of the work the foundation of which he had laid. When his mind was opened he could understand, in many respects, the designs of God; and these revelations were around him and they guided his footsteps. They could not fail of fulfillment, they had to be accomplished in the earth. The servant of God came forth and he received the Book of Mormon—the record or stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim. He brought forth that record according to the dictation of Moroni, Nephi and Lehi, the angels of God who administered to him, and he translated it into the English language before he laid the foundation of this church. Joseph Smith did not call upon any man to ordain or to baptize him, but he waited until the Lord sent forth his servants to administer unto him. He was commanded of the Lord to go forth and be baptized, but not until he had received the priesthood. Where did he get it, and in fact what is the priesthood? It is the authority of God in heaven to the sons of men to administer in any of the ordinances of his house. There never was a man and never will be a man, in this or any other age of the world, who has power and authority to administer in one of the ordinances of the house of God, unless he is called of God as Aaron, unless he has the holy priesthood and is administered to by those holding that authority.

There was no man on the face of the earth, nor had not been for the last seventeen centuries, who had power and authority from God to go forth and administer in one of the ordinances of the house of God. What did he do then? Why, the Lord sent unto him John the Baptist, who, when upon the earth, held the Aaronic priesthood, who was beheaded for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. He laid his hands upon the head of Joseph Smith and ordained him to the Aaronic priesthood, and he never attempted to act in any authority of the gospel until he received this priesthood. Joseph was then qualified to baptize for the remission of sins, but he had not the authority to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and he never attempted to administer in this ordinance until Peter, James and John, two of whom—Peter and James—were also martyred for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God. These three men were the last who held the keys of the apostleship in its fulness and power previous to this dispensation. They laid their hands upon the head of Joseph Smith, and sealed upon him every power, principle, ordinance and key belonging to the Apostleship, and until he received this ordination he was not qualified and had no right to administer in the ordinances of the house of God, but he did this after he received the priesthood, and on the 6th day of April, 1830, he organized this church with six members, which was the foundation of what we see to-day in this tabernacle, and for six hundred miles through this American desert. This has all come from that small seed—the foundation of the great kingdom of our God upon the earth.

What did Joseph Smith do after having received this priesthood and its ordinances? I will tell you what he did. He did that which seven centuries and fifty generations, that have passed and gone, of all the clergy and religions of Christendom, and the whole world combined were not able to do—he, although an illiterate youth, presented to the world the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness, plainness and simplicity, as taught by its Author and his apostles; he presented the church of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God perfect in their organization, as Paul represents them—with head and feet, arms and hands, every member of the body perfect before heaven and earth. How could he, an illiterate boy, do that which the whole of the learning of the Christian world for seven centuries failed to do? Because he was moved upon by the power of God, he was instructed by

those men who, when in the flesh, had preached the same gospel themselves, and in doing this he fulfilled that which Father Adam, Enoch, Moses, Elias, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Jesus and his apostles all prophesied about. Well might Paul say—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation unto every one that believes." So may the Latter-day Saints say—"We are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." I am not ashamed to say that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God; I am not ashamed to bear record that he was called of God, and laid the foundation of this church and kingdom on the earth, for this is true, and any man or woman who is inspired by the Holy Ghost can see and understand these things.

My brethren and sisters and friends, here is laid the foundation of the fulfillment of that mighty flood of prophecy delivered since the days of Father Adam down to the last prophet who breathed the breath of life. There has been more prophecy fulfilled in the last forty-three years upon the face of the earth than in two thousand years before. These mighty prophecies, as I said before, like a band of iron, governed and controlled Joseph Smith in his labors while he lived on the earth. He lived until he received every key, ordinance and law ever given to any man on the earth, from Father Adam down, touching this dispensation. He received powers and keys from under the hands of Moses for gathering the house of Israel in the last days; he received under the hands of Elias the keys of sealing the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers; he received under the hands of Peter, James and John the apostleship, and everything belonging thereto; he received under the hands of Moroni all the keys and powers required of the stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim; he received under the hand of John the Baptist the Aaronic priesthood, with all its keys and powers, and every other key and power belonging to this dispensation, and I am not ashamed to say that he was a prophet of God, and he laid the foundation of the greatest work and dispensation that has ever been established on the earth.

Joseph Smith lived until he gave his testament to the world, and when he had sealed all these keys, powers and blessings upon the head of Brigham Young and his brethren; when he had planted these keys on the earth so that they should be removed no more forever; when he had done this, and brought forth that record, that book of revelation, the proclamation of which involved the destiny of this whole generation—Jew, Gentile, Zion and Babylon, all the nations of the earth, he sealed that testimony with his blood in Carthage jail, where his life and that of his brother Hyrum were taken by the hands of wicked and ungodly men. Why was his life taken? Why were not John Taylor and Willard Richards, the only two of the Twelve at that time in Nauvoo and with him also sacrificed? Why did Willard Richards, the largest man in the prison, stand in the midst of that shower of balls and escape without a hole in his robe or garment, or clothing? Because these things were all governed and controlled by the revelations of God and the word of the Lord. The Lord took whom he would take and he preserved whom he would preserve, and he has done this all the way through. Why has Brigham Young been preserved, when he has stood as much chance to lay down his life in defence of this cause, and run as many dangers in one position and another as anybody else? Because the Lord has had a hand and a meaning in this, and he has preserved him for a certain purpose, and other men have been preserved by the same power. The whole of it has been the work of God on the earth. The revelations of God have surrounded Brigham Young. The revelations of God in ancient days affect him and the apostles, and the elders of Israel as much as they have affected any people in any generation.

I will speak of another branch of this subject. We have the kingdom organized, the prophecies have been fulfilled, the church has been planted in the earth, and now there are other portions of these revelations which must be fulfilled. We were settled in Jackson County, Clay County, Caldwell County, in Kirtland and finally in Nauvoo. We were driven from one place to

another until we settled Nauvoo, and at last we were driven from Nauvoo into the wilderness and to this land, led here by President Brigham Young under the inspiration of Almighty God. Some felt their faith tried that we had to leave our lovely Nauvoo and go into the wilderness. Bless your souls, there would have been a flood of revelation unfulfilled if these things had not been so. Isaiah speaks of the foundation of this great Zion, and writes the whole of her history and travels up to the present day, and from this time on until the winding up scene. If we had not been driven from Nauvoo we would never have come up the Platte river, where, Isaiah says, he saw the Saints going by the river of water wherein went no galley with oars; a great company of women with child and her that travailed with child would never have come here to the mountains of Israel if we had not been driven from that land, and a whole flood of prophecy would have remained unfulfilled, with regard to our making this desert blossom as the rose, the waters coming forth out of the barren desert, our building the house of God on the tops of the mountains, lifting up a standard for these nations to flee to; all this and much more would have remained unfulfilled had we not been guided and led by the strong arm of Jehovah, whose words must be fulfilled though the heavens and the earth pass away.

Having been brought to Zion another subject presents itself to our consideration—namely, the position which President Young occupies in regard to us to-day. He calls upon us to build temples, cities, towns and villages, and to do a great deal of temporal work. Strangers and the Christian world marvel at the "Mormons" talking about temporal things. Bless your souls, two thirds of all the revelations given in this world rest upon the accomplishment of this temporal work. We have it to do, we can't build up Zion sitting on a hemlock slab singing ourselves away to everlasting bliss; we have to cultivate the earth, to take the rocks, and elements out of the mountains and rear temples to the Most High God; and this temporal work is demanded at our hands by the God of heaven, as much as he required Christ to die to redeem the world, or as much as the Savior required Peter, James and John to go and preach the gospel to the nations of the earth. This is the great dispensation in which the Zion of God must be built up, and we as Latter-day Saints have it to build. People think it strange because so much is said with regard to this. I will tell you Latter-day Saints, and the Christian world too, our work will fall short, we will come short of our duties, and we never shall perform the work that God Almighty has decreed we shall perform unless we enter into these temporal things. We are obliged to build cities, towns and villages, and we are obliged to gather the people from every nation under heaven to the Zion of God, that they may be taught in the ways of the Lord. We have only just begun to prepare for the celestial law when we are baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

There has been a good deal said here with regard to baptism for the dead. When Joseph Smith had laid the foundation of this work he was taken away. There are good reasons why it was so. Jesus sealed his testimony with his blood. Joseph Smith did the same, and from the day he died his testimony has been in force upon the whole world. He has gone into the spirit world and organized this dispensation on that side of the veil; he is gathering together the elders of Israel and the Saints of God in the spirit world, for they have a work to do there as well as here. Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Father Smith, David Patten and the other elders who have been called to the other side of the veil have fifty times as many people to preach to as we have on the earth. There they have all the spirits who have lived on the earth in seven centuries—fifty generations, fifty thousand millions of persons who lived and died here without having seen a prophet or apostle, and without having the word of the Lord sent unto them. They are shut up in prison, awaiting the message of the elders of Israel. We have only about a thousand millions of people on the earth, but in the spirit world they have fifty thousand millions; and there is not a single revelation which gives us any reason to believe that any man who