

LECTURE.

BY
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AT THE request of the Presidency of Davis Stake of Zion, I have delivered two lectures in each of the wards of that county. Being a young man I have addressed myself to the young people, with a view to strengthen their faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ which has been revealed anew to the earth in this age of the world. And in considering the subject before us to night—"Joseph Smith's Mission"—I desire to show to my young brethren and sisters that our fathers have not been following cunningly devised fables, but that they have and so have we, good and sufficient reasons for believing in the Mission of Joseph Smith as a divine one.

In considering the subject of our lecture the question naturally arises what was Joseph Smith's Mission? It was the Mission of Joseph Smith, under God's direction, to establish the Church of Christ and the Kingdom of God upon the earth; and to the accomplishment of this work he devoted the whole energy of his life and was faithful unto death.

But this statement of what his mission was, gives birth to another question: Is there any necessity for such a work as ascribed to Joseph Smith being performed? The Christian world believe that when Christ was upon the earth in the flesh that he then established his Church and Kingdom and what it has continued among men from that time until the present. And although many changes have taken place in regard to principles and doctrines, and divisions and subdivisions have distracted the religious world—yet they claim that those things which are essential to the existence of Christ's Church and Kingdom have remained among men. This is their theory. We have a theory which is opposite to theirs.

The first revelation that Joseph Smith received from the Lord, was that men were teaching for doctrine the commandments and precepts of men and that He [the Lord] did not acknowledge their institutions as His Church or Kingdom, and told Joseph to join none of them.

Here then you see, we have two propositions presented to us; if one is true the other must be false; both cannot be correct. If the theory held by the Christian world be true, then there appears no necessity for such a work as we ascribe to Joseph Smith being performed; for if the Kingdom of God has continued upon the earth from the days of Jesus until the present, then there would be no need of any one being raised up to establish that which was already here; and proving that there was no necessity for such a work as that ascribed to Joseph Smith would be a big stride towards proving that he was an impostor. But if we can show that the theory held by the Christian World is incorrect,—if we can prove that there has been an apostasy—that men have been following for doctrine the commandments of men; if we can prove that Christ's Church and Kingdom were not upon the earth at the time Joseph Smith's Mission commenced—then the necessity of such a work as we claim he performed, becomes apparent; and if there is a necessity for such a work as the restoration of the Kingdom of God to the Earth, may not Joseph Smith have been the instrument in the hands of God in performing that work?

Let us consider the question then—Has there been an apostasy? We cannot examine this subject in detail. All we shall be able to do, is to briefly refer to some of those prophecies which relate to the subject. We begin by calling your attention to the 24th chapter of Isaiah; commencing with the 4th verse; "The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish."

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant."

"Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left."

I have had men in the world try to reason away the force of this prophecy in the following manner: They reminded us that Isaiah lived in the Mosaic dispensation, when the law of carnal commandments was in force; and claim that it was of this carnal law of which Isaiah spake—it was the law of Moses that was to be transgressed; the Mosaic ordinances which were to be changed; the Mosaic Covenant which was to be broken. These assertions, however, are incorrect—from the fact that the Mosaic law never was considered, by those who understood it "an everlasting covenant," it was given for a special purpose, and when it had accomplished that purpose, it was laid aside.

We read from Galatians, 3 chapter and 8 verse:

"And the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

From this it appears, that the Gospel was preached unto Abraham. In the 4th chapter of Hebrews and 2 verse, Paul in speaking of ancient Israel says: "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached, did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Not only then was the Gospel preached unto Abraham, but also unto the children of Israel. Now let us go back to the 3rd chapter of Galatians, for Paul having stated that the Gospel was preached unto Abraham, asks this question (19 verse):

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression, till seed should come to whom the promise was made."

Added to what? Added to the Gospel, which before that time had been preached unto Abraham, and also to ancient Israel. But the Israelites under Moses were unable to live the perfect law of the Gospel, were not strong enough to overcome evil with good, as the Gospel requires, so a law of carnal commandments was "added" to the Gospel—a law which included the principle of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"—a law which was suited to their capacity. Paul still speaking of this subject in the same chapter of Galatians (already quoted, 23 verse), says:

"Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed."

"Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

"But after that faith has come, we are no longer under a school-master."

From these passages of Scripture, we learn this: The Gospel was preached to Abraham, and also to ancient Israel. The Israelites were unable to live the law of the Gospel—so a law of carnal commandments, known as the law of Moses, was given as a school-master to bring them up to the higher law: Christ came and introduced that higher law—the Gospel, explained its precepts, and pointed out the difference between it and the law of Moses. The Gospel took the place of the law of Moses, which was laid aside having fulfilled the object for which it was added to the Gospel. If then the law of Moses was not an everlasting covenant, this prophecy of Isaiah's which we are considering, does not relate to it, as the prophecy of Isaiah was concerning an everlasting Covenant.

We find in Hebrews xiii, 20, the following: "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect," etc.

From this we learn, that Christ's blood is called the blood of the everlasting covenant. Paul in writing to Titus gives us to understand that he lived "in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began," and this immortal life which God had promised—this everlasting covenant which God had made with man before the world began, was sealed by the blood of Christ, and this life and immortality were brought to light through the Gospel—and is called in the Scripture, the everlasting Gospel, or covenant; and Isaiah says, that the laws of the everlasting covenant, or the Gospel laws, shall be transgressed, the Gospel ordinances shall be changed: and in consequence of these serious transgressions the earth is to be burned, and few men left, which judgment still is hanging over the inhabitants of the earth. Having proven then that this prophecy of Isaiah's refers to the Gospel, and not the law of Moses, let us remember that Jesus said, "Though heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle of my word shall fail, but all shall be fulfilled." Either Isaiah was mistaken when he spake as moved upon by the Holy Ghost in relation to the world departing from that order of things inaugurated by the Savior, or else the Christian world is incorrect in maintaining that the Gospel in all that is essential, has continued from the days of Jesus to the present time.

Some five noted Christian writers more candid than their fellows, have freely admitted the apostasy of Christendom. We will introduce their testimony. John Wesley in his 94th sermon says:

The reason why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost are no longer in the church, "is because the love of many waxed cold, and the Christians had turned heathens again, and had only a dead form left."

The following quotation is taken from page 163 of Smith's Dictionary of the Bible. This work is indorsed by the names of 63 divines of both Europe and America, all noted for their scholarship. They say:

"We must not expect to see the Church of Holy Scripture actually existing in its perfection upon the earth. It is not to be found this perfect, either in the collected fragments of Christendom, or still less in any one of those fragments." This is a frank acknowledgement of all that we claim as to the apostasy of the primitive Church. Christ and his Apostles established the Church upon the earth in the days of their ministry, and now we are told that it is not to be found even in the collected fragments of Christendom—that is, take the principles of truth which each sect possesses, and put them all together, and yet from this collection of truths we would not find the Gospel of Christ. Let us then take them at their word; they have but a dead form left—"The Church of Christ is not to be found on the earth." These admissions on the part of the prominent writers of Christendom, coupled with the prophecy of Isaiah, forces

us to the conclusion that men have corrupted the Gospel, as taught by Christ and the Apostles—that there has been an apostasy, and it must needs be that God set up His Kingdom again upon the earth.

By examination, we shall find that the Scriptures predict the restoration of the Gospel. It pleased the Almighty while His servant John was on the Isle of Patmos, to show him many things that would transpire in the future. While wrapped in heavenly vision, he saw, among other things, "Another angel fly in the midst of heaven having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell upon the earth, to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, saving with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of His judgment is come." It appears, from this passage of Scripture, which you will find in the 14th chapter of Revelation, that the angel who is to come with the Gospel, will make his appearance just prior to the judgments of God being poured out upon the children of men in the last days—"In the hour of God's judgment." This Gospel was not to be preached merely to one nation or people, but to EVERY nation, every kindred, every tongue, and every people. It is evident to my mind, that all nations, tongues and peoples must have been without the Gospel, or why would it be necessary for the Lord to restore it by the ministry of an angel to all peoples and tongues, if any of them possessed it? There is another prophet who has predicted the setting up of God's Kingdom upon the earth in the last days. I refer to Daniel, the Hebrew prophet, who was among the captive Jews, who were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar, about six hundred years B. C. The Lord gave unto this same king of Babylon a wonderful dream, but he had forgotten it. He assembled all his wise men and magicians and demanded that they tell him his dream, and the interpretation thereof. If they failed to do so, death was to be the penalty. This produced great consternation among the wise men, but the Lord revealed the thing to Daniel, who came before the king with the dream and the interpretation of it.

The king saw a great image, the head of which was gold; the arms and chest of silver; the trunk of brass; the legs of iron; the feet and toes part of iron and part of potter's clay. He also saw a little stone, cut out of the mountains without hands, which smote the image on the feet and toes, and brake them in pieces; then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold broken to pieces, and became as the chaff of the summer's threshing floors, and the wind carried them away, but the little stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Such was the dream. Daniel in giving the interpretation thereof, said unto Nebuchadnezzar, "Thou, O king! art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power and strength and glory; thou art this head of gold."—Daniel 2, verses 37 and 38. The head of this great image, therefore, was the Babylonian kingdom, which flourished in the sixth and seventh centuries, B. C., but in 538, B. C., it was destroyed. Daniel continues: "And after thee"—Nebuchadnezzar—"shall arise another kingdom, inferior to thee."—Verse 39. The Medio-Persian Empire succeeded the Babylonian kingdom, and continued from 538 to 331, B. C., and is represented by the chest and arms of silver in the great image.

Again we quote: "And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth."—Verse 39. The Macedonian Empire succeeded the Medio-Persian, being founded by Alexander the Great, and did "bear rule" over the then known world, continuing until 161, B. C.

"And the fourth kingdom," says Daniel, "shall be strong as iron; for as much as iron breaketh in pieces, and subdueth all things, and as iron breaketh, all these things shall it," the fourth kingdom, "break in pieces and bruise."—Verse 40. The Macedonian Empire, founded by Alexander the Great, was pushed out of existence by the Roman Empire, which entirely supplanted it in 161, B. C. The Roman nation is the fourth great nation seen by Nebuchadnezzar in the image, and is represented by the legs of iron; and as iron breaketh in pieces all other metals, so the Roman nation broke in pieces the other kingdoms of the earth.

We still have left the feet and toes of the image, which are part of iron and part of clay. What kingdom or kingdoms do they represent?

In the year 364, A. D., the Roman Empire was divided between Valentinian and Valens. The western part of the empire was assailed by the Goths, Vandals, Huns and other tribes inhabiting the north part of Europe until it wauterly destroyed 383, A. D. From its ruins arose those kingdoms and empires which to-day occupy the western part of Europe.

The eastern part of the Roman Empire was destroyed by the invasions of the Saracens, and out of this part of ancient Rome has sprung the kingdoms which now occupy the east of Europe, and the west of Asia.

The old Roman Empire, then, represented in the image by the legs of iron, was divided and subdivided, until the kingdoms represented by the feet and toes of this image are in existence. Concerning these feet and toes Daniel says, "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they" Who? Why those nations which sprung up out of the ruins of the Roman Empire—"they shall mingle them-

selves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." The nations now in existence marry and intermarry—"mingle themselves with the seed of men," striving in this manner to unite their interest and avert calamity, but all in vain; they do not cleave together any more than hard pieces of iron will dissolve and become one substance with clay. We have now traced this prophecy down to our own times—to the kingdoms that exist in our own days. What comes next? Why, says Daniel, "In the days of these kings," represented by the feet and toes of the image, "shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

Not only, then, does John tell us that the Gospel, in the hour of God's judgment, shall be restored to the earth by the ministry of an angel, but the Prophet Daniel has proclaimed to us that in the last days, for he says, (2nd chapter, 28th verse), "There is a God who maketh known unto the king what shall be in the latter days;" the God of heaven would set up His kingdom, and has given us the assurance that it would stand for ever. No handwriting will ever appear upon the walls of the temples of that kingdom, saying the kingdom is divided and given to another people. Whatever may be our fate as individuals, we may rest assured the Kingdom of God has come to stay.

Having shown from the Scriptures not only that there would be a universal apostasy, but also a restoration of the Gospel, and the setting up of the Kingdom of God in the last days, we are now at liberty to inquire what the reasons of men are for rejecting Joseph Smith as God's instrument in accomplishing this work.

Is the fact that Joseph Smith was rejected by the world, hated and persecuted by thousands, any evidence against his being the chosen servant of God, to accomplish the mighty work of setting up the Kingdom of God upon the earth in the last days? Let history answer that question. How have the servants of God been received in all ages of the world? Much in the same way that Joseph Smith was. Paul, in speaking of the Prophets, tells us "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." (Heb. iv, 37, 38.) Jesus was hated and despised by the world, and finally put to death by the wicked. His Apostles and disciples fared but little better. Concerning the Apostles Paul says: "We are fools for Christ's sake, * * * even unto this present time we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." (I Cor. iv.) Was Joseph Smith despised any more than these ancient servants of God were? But Jesus says: "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke vi, 22, 26.)

On another occasion the same Great Teacher said to His disciples: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." And does not the same principle hold good to-day? And if Joseph Smith was indeed God's servant, would not the world hate him? This principle also holds good when applied to the people of God as a whole. If the Latter-day Saints were as vile and corrupt, or as ungodly as they are represented to be by their enemies, if they were as licentious as they are said to be—then as God lives they would be of the world; and if of the world, and the principle which Jesus laid down be true, then the world would love them; but from the fact that this people are hated of the world, we have an assurance that they are not of the world; but God hath chosen them out of the world, and the world hate them.

Joseph Smith then, being despised, rejected, and persecuted by men, is no valid objection to his being the honored servant of God. I have heard other objections urged against Joseph Smith: such as he was unlearned—uneducated in the wisdom of the world—and this was true. That is, in his youth he was unlettered, and his scholastic attainments were limited, but as he grew to manhood, his lack of education could scarcely be complained of, as he proved himself able to cope with all the scholars of the age.

It is also alleged that both he and his followers were men that came from the humble walks of life, and were not among the lawyers, the rulers, and the professors—the same objections were urged against Jesus and His followers—His Apostles. But what does such an objection amount to? Are not these the class of men that God has almost invariably called to perform His work? I read the following passage from the first chapter of I Corinthians:

"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called."

"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty;

"And base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen: yea, and the things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh might glory in His presence."

To say, then, that Joseph Smith's estate was lowly and that he was unlearned when called to the work of God, instead of being a valid objection against him, is, to the contrary, an evidence in his favor.

Having thus disposed of the objections made against his being a good man and a servant of God, let us next inquire into the evidence of his being an instrument in the hands of God in restoring the Gospel, and setting up the Kingdom of God upon the earth. What evidences have the Latter-day Saints to offer to the world that he accomplished this important work? First the work itself: the institution which he organized—it is an exact facsimile of that which Christ instituted when He ministered upon the earth. Did the ancient Apostles teach faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world—did they teach salvation in His name? Yes, and so do we! Did they teach repentance, which include the forsaking of sin? Yes, and so do we! Did they teach baptism by immersion for the remission of sin? and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost? the resurrection of the dead and future rewards and punishments? Yes, and so do we!

Did they have in the Church Apostles, Prophets, Seventies, Elders, Bishops, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers, and Deacons—together with other helps and governments in the Church organization? Yes, and the same in the Church of Christ to-day, which Joseph Smith, under God, has organized on the earth.

Did the ancient Saints enjoy the spiritual gifts and blessings of the Gospel—the gifts of knowledge, wisdom, faith, healing, tongues, interpretations, discerning of spirits, revelation, prophecy, visitation of angels, etc.? Yes; and do the Latter-day Saints enjoy these things? You know they do, for you are witnesses of these things—then this institution exactly resembles that which Jesus established upon the earth when He was here. Is the same in its principles and ordinances; its officers and organization and the same results—the same gifts and graces grow out of obedience to its requirements. If you compare the institution known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with that institution described in the New Testament, you will find they correspond with each other, as face answers to face in the mirror. This feat of organizing a church which should in every respect resemble that of Christ's has been the ambition of the learned and pious reformers for centuries past; but they have failed. The world, however, are now compelled to admit one or the other of the two following conclusions: Either Joseph Smith, unlettered youth though he was, has a far out-stripped the learning and wisdom of ages, and by the power of his own genius accomplished that which genius aided by scholarship could not do in previous centuries; or else we must conclude that God has in deed again spoken from heaven, and revealed the Gospel and the organization of His Kingdom through Joseph Smith. The first conclusion is absurd; the second is the true solution of the mystery, and thousands testify of it.

Another reason I would offer to sustain his being called of God, is—started right. I have seen a man somewhere which reads: "Well begun is half done."

Jesus when among His Disciples one occasion appeared curious to know what people thought of Him. He said to His Apostles, "Whom do you say that I, the Son of Man, am?" It was answered, that some said He was John the Baptist, others Elias, one of the prophets. "But whom do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," said Jesus, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven; and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. xvi.) What was that rock upon which the Church was to be built? It was upon the principle of God revealing unto men that Jesus was the Christ—the principle of revelation.

In the Spring of 1820, Joseph Smith, in obedience to the instruction given in James—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him"—was praying in the woods to the Father, when he was suddenly enraptured in a glorious vision. He saw a pillar of light descending from heaven—it rested upon him—its brightness exceeded the brightness of the sun at noon-day. In the midst of this glorious light stood two personages: each resembling the other. One standing a little above the other, pointing to the one below him said: "This is my beloved son; hear ye him." "Blessed art thou, Peter, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven." The same could be said to Joseph Smith now, for