

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER ORSON PRATT,

DELIVERED

In the First Ward School-house,
Sunday Afternoon Dec.

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REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

We will commence our discourse by reading a part of the 25th, and the 26th and 27th sections of a revelation, given December 27th, 1832, contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

"And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying, prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come: behold, and lo! the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

"And immediately there shall appear a great sign in heaven, and all people shall see it together. And another angel shall sound his trumpet, saying, that great church, the mother of abominations, that made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, that persecuteth the saints of God, that shed their blood; her who sitteth upon many waters, and upon the islands of the sea; behold, she is the tares of the earth, she is bound in bundles, her bands are made strong, no man can loose them; therefore, she is ready to be burned. And he shall sound his trumpet both long and loud, and all nations shall hear it.

"And there shall be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, and immediately after shall the curtain of heaven be unfolded, as a scroll is unfolded after it is rolled up, and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled; and the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened, and be caught up to meet him. And they who have slept in their graves shall come forth; for their graves shall be opened, and they also shall be caught up to meet him in the midst of the pillar of heaven: they are Christ's, the first fruits: they who shall descend with him first, and they who are on the earth and in their graves, who are first caught up to meet him; and all this by the voice of the sounding of the trump of the angel of God."

This revelation was given through our prophet, and seer, and revelator, Joseph Smith, who was one of the greatest men who ever lived in this probation, one of the greatest prophets, with the exception of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, ever sent to our earth. I think it is forty-one years yesterday since this revelation was given. In it are revealed many things pertaining to the salvation of the children of men, and pertaining to the great and eventful works of the Lord which are about to take place on the earth. In the sections preceding those which I have read we have an account of certain great events that have not yet transpired, namely, that after the testimonies of the servants of God among the nations comes the testimony of many judgments, which will be poured upon the nations, such as earthquakes, wars, the sea heaving beyond its bounds, and a variety of calamities which shall make the hearts of all the wicked fall them for fear. After these great judgments are poured upon the nations of the earth, then will be fulfilled the words which I have read, "and angels will fly through the midst of heaven sounding the trump of God, saying prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth, for the judgment of our God is come, behold and lo! the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." After these angels have flown through the midst of heaven calling upon the inhabitants of the earth to prepare for the coming of the Bridegroom, seven more angels are to sound their trumpets. The first one sounds and his proclamation is concerning great Babylon, "who has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, concerning her who sits upon many waters, who has her dominion among many nations, kindreds, tongues and people, behold she is the tares of all the earth, she is bound in bundles, her bands are made strong, no man can loose them, therefore she is ready to be burned, and he shall sound his trumpet both long and loud, and all nations shall hear it."

There must be something connected with the sounding of this trumpet that is miraculous in order

that all nations may hear it. Any sound that can be produced by mortal man does not reach, generally speaking, over about thirty miles from where it originates, which is a very small space indeed. But there will be something connected with the sounding of the trump of the first of the seven angels which will manifest a power which we know nothing of. The sound of that trump will be heard by all people, nations, kindreds and tongues in the four quarters of our globe. I do not know that the sound will be so much louder than some we have heard, but it will be carried by some miraculous power so that all people will hear it.

"Immediately after the sounding of this trump there will be silence in heaven for the space of half an hour." Whether the half hour here spoken of is according to our reckoning—thirty minutes, or whether it be according to the reckoning of the Lord we do not know. We know that the word hour is used in some portions of the Scriptures to represent quite a lengthy period of time. For instance, we, the Latter-day Saints, are living in the eleventh hour, that is in the eleventh period of time; and for aught we know the half hour during which silence is to prevail in heaven may be quite an extensive period of time. During the period of silence all things are perfectly still; no angels flying during that half hour; no trumpets sounding; no noise in the heavens above; but immediately after this great silence the curtain of heaven shall be unfolded as a scroll is unfolded. School children, who are in the habit of seeing maps hung up on the wall, know that they have rollers upon which they are rolled up, and that to expose the face of the maps they are let down. So will the curtain of heaven be unrolled so that the people may gaze upon those celestial beings who will make their appearance in the clouds. The face of the Lord will be unveiled, and those who are alive will be quickened, and they will be caught up; and the Saints who are in their graves, will come forth and be caught up, together with those who are quickened, and they will be taken into the heavens into the midst of those celestial beings who will make their appearance at that time. These are the ones who are the first fruits, that is, the first fruits at the time of his coming.

There was a period some eighteen centuries ago when the Saints arose from their graves, after the resurrection of Christ, he being the first fruits. That is called in the Book of Mormon the first resurrection; it took place about the time, or a little after the resurrection of Jesus. But when he comes the second time, the first fruits of the resurrection will be the Saints who come out of their graves. They, in connection with the saints of all ages, will be the church of the first-born, and they will descend with the Savior when he comes.

There are some who suppose, when these Saints are thus resurrected and taken up into heaven, that this will be the precise period when Jesus will descend on the earth; but I wish to correct this idea by the aid of both old and new revelation. Instead of Jesus immediately descending to the earth, when these Saints are thus taken into heaven, he will stay until the seven angels have sounded their trumpets. There will be quite a lapse of time between the sounding of each of these seven; some months will intervene; they do not all follow directly one after the other or in the course of a few hours time; but there will be a period between in which certain great and marvelous events will take place. For instance, if we read the revelations of St. John, we find that when the fifth angel shall sound his trumpet, the bottomless pit shall be opened, and there shall come forth a great smoke, and a cloud of locusts, so great that the sun and air shall be darkened; and these locusts shall have power to torment men five months before the sounding of the sixth trumpet. This shows that there will be a period of at least five months, between the sounding of the trumpets of the fifth and sixth angels. Read also concerning the sounding of the sixth trumpet, and you will find that there is a great work to be accomplished before the seventh angel shall sound, for in the time intervening between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates are to be loosed, and they are to gather together a very great

army. If I recollect aright, that army is to consist of two hundred millions of people, who are to ride on some kind of beasts or animals which the Lord, probably by some supernatural means, will prepare for the occasion. These personages who come forth riding upon these beasts are prepared for an hour, for a day for a month and for a year; and their work is to slay a third part of the hosts of men then existing upon the earth, and as they are prepared for an hour, a day, a month, and a year, it shows there will be quite a lapse of time between the sounding of the trump of the sixth and seventh angel.

We might bring up, also, the declaration of John in relation to the two witnesses who are to prophesy about that period. They are to prophesy three and a half years, and their field of labor will be Jerusalem, after it shall have been rebuilt by the Jews. By means of their prophecies, and the power of God attending them, the nations who are gathered together against Jerusalem will be kept at bay, these prophets will hold them in check by their faith and power. By and by these nations overcome the two witnesses and, having finished their mission, they are slain, and their bodies will lie three days and a half in the streets of the city. Then a great earthquake will take place, and these two witnesses will be caught up to heaven.

All this takes place after these trumpets begin to sound; and if these two witnesses are to fulfil a mission of three and a half years, it shows that the sounding of the trumpets does not take place, as many have supposed, in rapid succession, but certain events have to be accomplished between their respective soundings. By and by the whole seven will have sounded, and then they commence to sound a second time. According to the revelation from which I have read, the second sounding of the trumpets is not to produce destruction among the nations, but the sound of the first one will reveal the secret acts of God, his purposes and doings on the earth during the first thousand years; the sounding of the second will reveal the doings and purposes of the Great Jehovah during the second thousand years, and so on, until the seventh shall sound the second time, and pronounce the work of God finished, so far as the great preparation needful for his second coming is concerned.

Notice, now, that it is the first sounding of the first of these seven, when the first resurrection takes place; and all these great works are to be performed on the earth, and years elapse before Jesus descends with all his Saints; that is, if we understand these things correctly, by what little is revealed upon the subject. There are many things which I would like to dwell upon in connection with the resurrection of the Saints and their being caught up into the heavens. The subject of the resurrection is one that we all are very much interested in; it is something which concerns all mankind, more or less, but especially the Latter-day Saints who are now living on the earth. We all see that our brethren and sisters, as well as the wicked, are passing away, leaving us; they are called upon to lay aside these bodies, which are deposited in the grave. They are passing off by scores, by hundreds and by thousands, and we expect to follow them, that is the most of us. Perhaps some may live until the coming of the Son of Man, or the sounding of the first trumpet; but inasmuch as most of us expect to lay our bodies down to sleep, it must be interesting to every Latter-day Saint to know something about the resurrection.

What can we know about it? Nothing except what the Lord has revealed, and let me here say that perhaps no subject pertaining to salvation was ever so fully revealed to the inhabitants of the earth as that of the resurrection of the body. Many people have thought that very little has been revealed on this subject; but if I am not mistaken we have an abundance, although there are many things in regard to it about which we are still in the dark, because they have not been revealed. But if we will carefully search the revelations that have been given, we may learn many things in regard to this great event which will be satisfying to our minds.

When we carry our friends to the grave yard we feel sorrowful, because we have to leave them, and because they are separated from us,

for a short time. All that kindness and sociability which existed are no more experienced, and we no longer have the privilege of their society as we had formerly, and consequently we mourn. But what a consolation it is to realize that, when our friends are laid down, we are not separated from them for ever if they have died in the faith and if we, ourselves, endure faithful to the end; for if we keep the commandments of God as we should, we have an assurance and a hope within us which cannot be shaken that we shall rise again and that our bodies will come forth from the grave.

Now let us try to understand how much is revealed upon this subject; and in order to understand it, let me refer you to some things that are contained in the Book of Mormon. On page 240 of that book we find something on the subject of the resurrection. That which I am about to read was spoken by the Prophet Amulek, in the city of Ammonihah, to a very wicked people, who were shortly afterwards totally destroyed because of their wickedness.

"Now, there is a death which is called a temporal death: and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death; the spirit and the body shall be re-united again in its perfect form: both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt. Now this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but all things shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

Thus we see that there will be no limbs lacking. If a person has lost his arm, his leg, or his eyes, they will be restored, and will stand before God perfect, and the wicked will have a bright recollection of all their guilt. The Prophet Amulek was trying to explain all this to a people who were full of guilt, having disobeyed the commandments of heaven, until they were almost ripe for destruction. He informed them that they should have a perfect knowledge of all their guilt. In this life there are many things that people, whether righteous or wicked, forget. Our memories are so weak that many things done in years passed are obliterated; but when they come forth in the morning of the resurrection, the wicked as well as the righteous, their memories will be restored, so that every act of their lives, whether good or evil, will be perfectly remembered, and the wicked will have a perfect knowledge of all their guilt. Will not this be sufficient to create an unquenchable fire in their breasts, and with this recollection, to behold the face of the Lord? Will not this cause them to shrink from his presence? I think it will. The Prophet Moroni, speaking on this subject, and addressing himself to the unbelieving who should live on the earth at the time the Book of Mormon should come forth, says—"You would be more miserable to dwell in the presence of that holy and pure Being than you would dwell with the damned souls in hell." That is perfectly reasonable; for a wicked person in the presence of God would be a place not adapted to his evil, corrupt, carnal nature. There must be a place of filthiness prepared for that which is filthy, that those who are filthy, wicked and corrupt may be placed in circumstances adapted to their condition. Such persons, when in the presence of God, would be glad for the rocks and mountains to fall upon and hide them, for the recollection of their iniquities will smite them, and kindle within them a flame like an unquenchable fire, for their consciences will have a bright recollection of all their guilt.

Now this restoration will come to all, both old and young, bond and free, male and female, righteous and wicked, and there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost. Many persons, when they advance in years, lose their hair, and become baldheaded. Will they rise in the resurrection without hair,

because they have been laid in the grave in that condition? No, that would be imperfection, and we have a statement in the Book of Mormon that not so much as one hair shall be lost. Again the Prophet Amulek says—"but all things shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, and shall be arraigned before the bar of Christ, the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. Now, behold I have spoken unto you concerning the death of the mortal body, and also concerning the resurrection of the immortal body. I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death, unto life, that they can die no more." What this means is this—there can be no further dissolution between the spirit and the body; they can not be separated, and they can die no more. This seems to make it plain that their spirits unite with their bodies never to be separated again, and return to dust, as in the first death, and thus becoming spiritual and immortal, "they can no more see corruption."

We will now turn to what the Prophet Alma said to his son Corianton, not only concerning the resurrection, but also concerning the condition or state of the spirit of man, between the time of death and the resurrection. This is on page 318 of the Book of Mormon.

"And now I would inquire what becometh of the souls of men from this time of death, to the time appointed for the resurrection? Now whether there is more than one time appointed for men to rise, it mattereth not; for all do not die at once, and this mattereth not; all is as one day with God; and time only is measured unto men, therefore there is a time appointed unto men, that they shall rise from the dead; and there is a space of time between the time of death and the resurrection. And now concerning this space of time. What becometh of the souls of men, is the thing which I have inquired diligently of the Lord to know; and this is the thing of which I do know. And when the time cometh when all shall rise, then shall they know that God knoweth all times which are appointed unto man. Now concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection. Behold, it has been made known unto me, by an angel, that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body; yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life. And then shall it come to pass the spirits of those who are righteous, are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise; a state of rest; a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow, &c.

"And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil; for behold, they have no part nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they choose evil works rather than good; therefore the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house; and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and this because of their own iniquity; being led captive by the will of the devil. Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked; yea, in darkness, and in a state of awful, fearful, looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection."

There is an idea prevalent, I do not know how prevalent, among the Saints, that we do not go directly home to God, when our spirits leave these bodies, but that there is a kind of intermediate state where we have to go through further preparations; but if I can understand the language contained in this declaration of Alma, it seems that the spirits of all men, whether wicked or righteous, as soon as they leave this mortal body, "go home to that God who gave them life," that is, they return to the place and position that they occupied while they were in the eternal worlds. It is called "home," because they once had their abiding place there, and they have been absent from home, while here in the body; but as soon as they are separated from the body, they all return to that ancient home, into the presence of the Lord.

After they get back there, they are completely redeemed, so far as