

Near Coming of Christ—Work to Be Accomplished—Temples Already Built, and Many More Yet to Be Built—Redemption of the Dead—Ezekiel’s Vision—How Long Will It Take to Warn the World?—Will the Lord Delay His Coming Until All this Work is Accomplished?—Joseph Smith’s Mission on Earth and Behind the Veil—Another Mission to Be Undertaken—The Resurrection of Joseph Smith Near—The Meaning of the Expression, “The Morning of the First Resurrection.”

Discourse by Apostle Erastus Snow, delivered in the Tabernacle, Logan, Saturday Afternoon, February 2nd, 1884.

I am asked to speak, but I feel in attempting to do so that my speech will be barren unless the Lord is pleased to inspire my mind by the Holy Spirit. I know there is faith in the hearts of the people and the Lord is able to give words of edification and comfort. I am not, however, impressed with anything in particular, in the way of doctrine, to speak to my brethren and sisters; I have only a feeling to exhort in general terms.

The Latter-day Saints realize as I do that every year brings us nearer to the coming of our Lord; that every month and week and day that passes over our heads, brings us nearer to the great and important events that must transpire, and that it does not become us to give way to a feeling of apathy and indifference, and to say in our hearts, “The Lord delayeth His coming,” and that tomorrow will be as this day and much more abundant, and that the next generation will be like the present, and as the world has continued to roll on, as generations have come and generations have gone, so will it be with us and our children. I say it does not become us to give way to these sentiments and feelings which are common with unbelievers, with the world, or with the unenlightened, who have not a knowledge of God, who have not been favored with the light of revelation, who have not discerned the signs of the times; for we are not the children of darkness, but the children of light. Light has come unto us. We have been called out of darkness unto light. We have been translated from the kingdom of darkness unto the kingdom of God’s dear Son, and therefore it may and ought to be said of us as Saint Paul said concerning the Saints: “Ye, brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” It is written and we expect it to be fulfilled upon the heads of the unbelieving and the wicked, that the Lord will overtake them as a thief in the night. “In such an hour,” said the Savior, “as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.” Now, it is not impossible, nor yet improbable, that there will be some among the Latter-day Saints who are called of God and appointed to this work, and who are set over their fellow servants to give them meat in due season, who will be found negligent, who will have forgotten their high and holy calling, who will have laid off their armor of righteousness, who will have become slothful and weary in well doing, and who will have taken to eating and drinking with the drunken and smiting their fellow servants; but as surely as any such are found among the servants of God, they will be overtaken when the day of the Lord cometh, and their portion will be appointed with hypocrites and unbelievers. But we hope better things of the Elders of Israel, of Presidents of Stakes, of Bishops, of High Councilors, of High Priests, of Seventies, of Priests, Teachers and Deacons, and of all the Latter-day Saints; for we have all been made partakers of this Priesthood, and the blessings of the Lord, directly or indirectly, have been conferred upon us.

The work before us is a great one, and very much remaineth to be accomplished according to the prophecies—Israel is to be gathered, Jerusalem rebuilt, Zion established, the vineyard of the Lord pruned and the corrupt branches cut off and cast into the fire, while the good branches shall be grafted in and partake of the root

and fatness of the tame olive tree. There is a great work to be accomplished in the earth. But the Lord has said by the mouth of His servants that He will cut His work short in righteousness in building up His Kingdom in the latter days. True, when the Lord speaketh He does not reckon time as we do. The time was, in the infancy of this Church, when our minds were so narrow compared to what they are now, that we looked for the speedy coming of our Lord, and the accomplishment of His great work before this time. But as our minds grew, and our ideas enlarged, we began to perceive that we were only children in our views and feelings, our ideas and expectations. We had the views, ideas and expectations of children; and we see how the Lord has enlarged Israel and expanded His work; and now we behold so much more to be accomplished than what has been accomplished, that we are apt in our minds to put off the day of the Lord a great way. The time was that we looked for one temple. The early revelations given to the Latter-day Saints predicted a temple in Zion, and Zion in our minds at that time was a little place on the Missouri River in Jackson County, Western Missouri—a town and a few surrounding villages, or a country, peradventure it may be as large as a county. When we first heard the fullness of the Gospel preached by the first Elders, and read the revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, our ideas of Zion were very limited. But as our minds began to grow and expand, why we began to look upon Zion as a great people, and the Stakes of Zion as numerous, and the area of the country to be inhabited by the people of Zion as this great American continent, or at least such portions of it as the Lord should consecrate for the gathering of His people. We ceased to set bounds to Zion and her Stakes. We began also to cease to think about a single temple in one certain place. Seeing the different Stakes of Zion that were being organized we perceived the idea, possibly, of as many temples. Having had one spot pointed out in the revelations for the temple in Jackson County, our minds expanded so that in a short time we were building another temple in a Stake of Zion in Kirtland, Ohio. A little while afterwards we were laying the foundation of a temple in Far West Missouri, and driven before our enemies; from that place we next laid the foundation and built up a temple unto the Lord in Nauvoo. When we located in the mountains and laid the foundation of a temple in Salt Lake City, who of us had an idea that before it should be completed we would be administering in a temple in St. George, and another in Logan, and another in Manti, and who conceives the idea today, that by the time these are completed and the Saints have officiated in them, we will be scattered over the American continent, building temples in a hundred other places? All this comes within the range of possibility, nay, probability, almost amounting to certainty. One of my brethren behind me here, who understands these things, and who can speak knowingly in regard to them, says, that we may put it down as a certainty, that by and by, there will be hundreds of these temples throughout the land. Our minds are beginning to comprehend the object and purpose of the temples of our God. We realize that they are places where the Lord bestows the keys of life and salvation pertaining to the everlasting Priesthood, and opens the door of redemption and salvation unto our dead. We begin to comprehend a little of the vision shown to Ezekiel, as recorded in the 37th chapter of his book. Ezekiel, while under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, was set down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. He explored the valley, saw there were very many bones, and, lo, they were very dry. The Lord commanded him to prophesy concerning them, and he prophesied, saying: “O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. * * * And the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dry, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.” Now, these were not the prophets and saints and righteous dead who had been partakers of the blessings of the Gospel and of the Priesthood, while in the flesh, but were those who had passed off in a day of darkness, and in their lost condition said to one another, and said in their hearts, “Our bones are dried, and *our hope is lost*: we are cut off for our parts.” But lo! the plan of salvation for the dead is revealed. The scheme which the Father had provided for the redemption of those whose hope was lost, and who were cut off is revealed unto their children, unto those who have been gathered from their long dispersion, and who have received the keys of the Holy Priesthood, which bringeth life and salvation to the dead as well as to the living. Having these keys committed unto us, we proceed to establish Zion; to build up her Stakes; to build her temples; to gather together those who purify themselves before the Lord, and qualify and fit themselves to become saviors upon Mount Zion, by entering into holy places and officiating for themselves and their dead, thus laying the foundation for the redemption of the dead in being baptized for them, in being ordained for them, in being blessed and endowed for them, in receiving the keys and the key words for them, that in the day

when the Elders who have passed behind the veil shall preach to them the Gospel of glad tidings of great joy, lo and behold! they will receive it and will be put in possession of those keys, endowments and blessings, whereby they may be freed from their prison houses, and be raised from the dead, and stand upon their feet an exceeding great army, and be restored to the blessings which God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their seed after them.

Now, this is the work before us, and I want to ask my brethren, the Elders of Israel, how long shall we be in accomplishing this work? Can I tell you? No, it is not given me to know. It is sufficient for us to know that the time has come for the work to be done: that the Lord has turned the key and opened the door; that it is an effectual door which no man can shut—the door of life and salvation. Hence it is our duty to step forward and magnify the calling whereunto God has called us. Send out the young men of Israel; send out the middle aged; send out those who have not as yet cleared their garments of the blood of this generation to call the children of men to repentance, and to see how many will engage with us in this great work of salvation, and become saviors upon Mount Zion. But this preaching the Gospel to the outside world is a small part of the work. It is but the ABC of the lesson to be learned and the work to be accomplished. How long, I ask, shall we be in accomplishing this work? It is not, as I have said, given to me to know; but I can tell you in general terms. As long as there is one soul (of all the sons and daughters of Adam that have been born on this earth) that has not had an opportunity of receiving and obeying the Gospel; as long as there is one soul that is in a condition to be saved and that can be reached by this plan of salvation, so long will the Latter-day Saints be engaged in this work. But what I was going to bring before your minds was this: Shall we expect that the Lord Jesus is going to delay His coming in the midst of His people, until all this great work shall have been accomplished? By no means. I do not understand that He has ever intimated anything of this kind. Nor need we wait in our faith and in our expectations till all these great and glorious things shall have been accomplished on the earth before the Prophet Joseph Smith shall come unto us again. He has merely taken another mission in advance of us. He fulfilled the mission given unto him on earth. The Lord was satisfied with his labors here. He lived long enough to endow his brethren with full authority to carry on the work that he had begun on the earth. He took his departure behind the veil. The Lord suffered his enemies to destroy him in the flesh, to take away his life, and he was made an offering—what shall I say? an offering for sin. Not in the sense in which the Savior was offered, but he was made a martyr for the truth and his blood was shed to attest the testimony that he bore to the world. He entered upon another short mission. Where? Why, unto his brethren of the house of Israel, and as many of the Gentiles as will receive his testimony, behind the veil. The mission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, between his death and resurrection was a similar mission, but a very short one. It lasted only three days. While his body lay in the tomb his spirit visited the spirits in prison, turned the key and opened the door of their prison house, and offered unto them the Gospel of salvation. How many of them were prepared to avail themselves of it at that time? Comparatively few. But he opened the door and offered the message of life and salvation, and having done this, His fellow laborers—the Seventies, Elders and others whom He ordained to the ministry—as fast as they finished their ministry in the flesh—continued their work among the spirits in prison. So is the Prophet Joseph Smith officiating and ministering to those spirits, and so are all His brethren, the Apostles, who have gone in his wake, who have followed, as it were, in his track. They have just gone behind the veil. Who shall we say? Let us call to mind a few of the brethren who have passed away—Brother David Patten (the first of the Apostles who was slain), Parley P. Pratt, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, Charles C. Rich, and others of the Apostles; also Patriarchs Father Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith; Elders Samuel H. Smith, Don Carlos Smith—all the first Elders of this Church and the Presidents of all the early quorums, and a vast company of the members of their quorums. All these and many more are laboring in the spirit world preparing the spirits thereof to receive the benefits and blessings which are now about to be offered to them in the temples of God. In other words, “a ticket of leave” is about to be sent to them to the effect that their friends on the earth have officiated in their behalf, have complied with the ordinances which are appointed for their redemption, which will enable them to advance into a higher sphere, to walk upon a higher plane, to enter a higher class where they can be further instructed and prepared for a glorious resurrection. And as fast as this work is accomplished—and it is nigh at hand, it is now even at our doors—there will be another step made in advance; there will be another mission undertaken. The next mission will be to come and prepare the way in Zion, and in her Stakes, and in the temples of our God for turning the key of the resurrection of the dead, to bring forth those that are asleep, and to

exalt them among the Gods. And who will be first and foremost? Why, he whom God has chosen and placed first and foremost to hold the keys of this last dispensation. How long will it be? It is not given to me to say the month, the day, or the hour; but it is given unto me to say that that time is nigh at hand. The time is drawing near (much nearer than scarcely any of us can now comprehend) when Joseph will be clothed upon with immortality, when his brother Hyrum will be clothed upon with immortality, when the martyrs will be raised from the dead, together with their faithful brethren who have performed a good mission in the spirit world—they, too, will be called to assist in the work of the glorious resurrection. The Lord Jesus, who was the firstfruits of the dead, the firstfruit of them that sleep, and who holds the keys of the resurrection, will bring to pass the resurrection of the Prophet Joseph and his brethren, and will set them to work in bringing about the resurrection of their brethren as He has set them to work in all the other branches of the labor from the beginning. And the Lord Jesus will appear and show Himself unto His servants in His temple in holy places, to counsel and instruct and direct. He will appear in the glory of His Father, in His resurrected body, among those who can endure His presence and glory. And all this I expect long before He will waste away and destroy the wicked from off the face of the earth. True, we have, in our limited understandings, perhaps imagined, many of us, that this glorious resurrection was to come upon us, and upon the whole world suddenly, like the rising of the sun. But you must remember the sun does not rise the same hour and the same moment upon all the earth. It is twenty-four hours in rising and twenty-four hours in setting. So with the resurrection. There is a day appointed for the resurrection of the righteous. And it is sealed upon the heads of many that if they are faithful and true, they shall come forth “in the morning of the first resurrection;” but the morning lasts from the first hour of the day until midday, and the day lasts till night; and the rest of the dead—those who are not prepared or counted worthy to have part in the first resurrection—shall not live again until the thousand years are ended. In other words, the first resurrection will have been ended, and another period appointed for the resurrection of the rest of the dead. But this “morning of the first resurrection” is nigh at hand, and blessed are those who, through their faithfulness, shall be counted worthy to have part in it; for they shall be crowned kings and priests with God and the Lamb—they shall reign with Christ and in the midst of His people, and carry on the work of the redemption and resurrection of the Saints of God. And while in some parts of the world the Elders of Israel are preaching the Gospel unto the heathen nations who have not been ripened for destruction, but whose kings and mighty men have perished, and whose governments have been broken in pieces and wasted away, and the government of the Kingdom of God has been extended over them; while this is going on in some portions of the world, in other places, even in Zion and in her Stakes and in Jerusalem, the children of God will be engaged in the redemption of their dead in the temples of our God, and in the resurrection of those that are counted worthy of so great a salvation.

Then, I say, we need not put off the day of the Lord so far from us. Rather let us prepare ourselves for it; for lo and behold! He cometh quickly, and blessed are they who are prepared to receive Him; for they shall enter into His rest and be crowned with glory, and shall labor with Him and with the Prophet Joseph and his brethren in bringing to pass this great salvation and redemption of our God.

May God help us to continue faithful, in the name of Jesus. Amen.