

The Gathering of the Saints—Their Sufferings—Ancient Predictions Fulfilled—Crickets and Their Miraculous Destruction—Crops Saved—Desert Made Fruitful—God’s Kingdom in the Mountains—Its Future Destiny—The Coming of the Lord

Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt, delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, June 20th, 1880.

I will call the attention of the congregation to a few verses, contained in the 50th Psalm, and the first six verses: “The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself.” It is very evident that the Psalmist, when writing these words, must have been inspired of the living God; for the events, here foretold, are clearly set forth in many other parts of the sacred scriptures. Two very important events are announced here; one is, the gathering of the Saints—those who have made a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice—and another is the coming of the Lord, not his first coming, but his second advent, when a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him; when he shall, in other words, come in his majesty, in his power, in great glory, or, as the apostle Paul expresses it in one of his epistles to the Thessalonians, “he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There seems to be connected with this advent of the Lord from the heavens, great power; his arm is to be made manifest before all people. Preparatory to this great event, there will be a universal gathering of the Saints from the four quarters of the earth. It is one of the signs preceding the second advent. It is clearly foretold by many of the prophets. David alludes to it, not only in this Psalm, but in many parts of his Psalms. The Spirit of God seems to have moved upon him to portray more or less the great work of the gathering of the Saints in the last days. Many suppose that he will come and find the Saints scattered all over the world, not gathered into any special country, but it is evident that those who have taken this view of the subject don’t understand the Scripture writings. Nothing is plainer in all the sacred Scriptures than the gathering of the people of God. The apostle Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, prophesies “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.” It seems to be a new dispensation, a dispensation that is characterized by the words “fulness of times.” When these times shall be fulfilled: when the day shall come for this great preparatory work to take place, the Lord will signify it by speaking from the heavens; or, as it is here stated, in the fourth verse of this Psalm which I have just read, “he shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” From this we draw the conclusion, that when the dispensation shall be fully ushered in: when the time for the great preparatory work shall take place, the heavens will no longer be sealed up, but the Lord will again speak, will call to the heavens, call upon his angels, call upon the ancient prophets who have died and gone the way of the whole earth, and are dwelling in the heavens, to do the work assigned to them, in the great and last dispensation of the fulness of times, in bringing about the gathering and restitution of his people upon the face of the earth. David, in the 107th Psalm, has very clearly portrayed this wonderful and great event. Perhaps it may be well for us to read the exact words. He commences the Psalm thus: “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” Now notice the gathering—“And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.” It seems to be a gathering from the four points of the compass, out of all lands. You might inquire if the prophets have said anything special in relation to the country where these Saints, or people of God are to be gathered. Let us read the next verse. After gathering them out of the different countries and lands, from the east, west, north and south, the Psalmist says, “They wandered in a wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way,” etc. Now this cannot refer to any

former dispensation of gathering. When the children of Israel in ancient days were collected together as a body, they were not taken from the east, west, north and south, but they were taken from one little country—the land of Goshen in Egypt. From there this handful of people, about twenty-five hundred thousand were taken, and in the course of time were permitted to inhabit the land of Canaan. But this gathering that is here spoken of informs us that they are to be gathered out of all lands. Who? The redeemed of the Lord—people who have heard the message of redemption, obeyed the ordinances of redemption, received the Gospel of redemption, and were the people of God, the people of Christ; they were the ones that were to wander in the wilderness, after they were thus gathered, and that wilderness would be a solitary way. Now, in gathering from Egypt to the land of Canaan, they wandered, it is true, in a small wilderness, on the east side of the Red Sea, but instead of bringing them forth where there was no city or habitation, he brought them forth to large and populous cities. The first city that they came to, after crossing from the east side of Jordan to the land on the west side, was the great city of Jericho, which the Lord delivered into their hands; and then there were numerous other cities that are mentioned in the Book of Joshua, which were delivered into the hands of the people. The children of Israel gathered out of one land; but this latter-day gathering was to be a people called “the redeemed of the Lord;” they were to go into a wilderness country. They were called, in many parts of the Scripture writings, “the people of Zion,” and “the Zion of the latter days.” The Lord calls them by this special name in the 51st chapter of Isaiah, and these are the words that are used: “For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.”

When I was a boy. I was inclined to attend very frequently the meetings that were held by the different denominations in the State of New York, my native State. I often heard this prophecy of Isaiah sung, by those who were singing anthems of praise to the Lord, “The Lord shall comfort Zion,” etc., but little did I know, in my boyhood or youth, what was meant by these predictions of Isaiah. It seems that the people of Zion are to be gathered out from all lands, from every nation under heaven, from the four points of the compass, and are to be brought into a solitary place, a wilderness, and when they arrive in that solitary place or wilderness, they will, at first, be greatly afflicted, sorely distressed, so much so that they will be under the necessity of crying unto the Lord, and he will deliver them from their distress. “They found no city to dwell in,” says David. Now, this was the case with the Latter-day Saints, whom the Lord commanded to gather together. When we started forth over the great desert plain, where there were no settlements, no cities, no towns, traveling hundreds of miles without any track to guide us, it was a “solitary way,” and rendered more terrible by the wild beasts that roamed over the plains. We could hear the sound of the wolf in his howlings; we could hear the sounds of the buffalos in their bellowings, but the sound of the human voice, from any village, or town, or settlement was unknown for hundreds of miles.

We commenced this journey in the year 1846, leaving the great Mississippi River in the cold month of February. After a portion of us had crossed the river in boats, the river was frozen over, and the rest of the company crossed in wagons on the ice. We had no grass to sustain our teams. Our teams depended upon the cottonwoods, and barks of trees, and a little corn that we could occasionally get by sending down to the settlements, and purchasing it for that purpose. We wandered in the wilderness “in a solitary way,” and when we had traveled some fourteen hundred miles, we found no city to dwell in, just precisely as the Psalmist said would be the case. We entered this valley in the month of July, 1847, having been detained during the winter, by sending over 500 of our people—young and middle-aged men—to help the United States in their war against Mexico. That detained us during the winter, so that we could not journey any further than Council Bluffs, or the regions a little above Omaha, where we built up a temporary residence. The next spring we started off, traveling over the plains “in a solitary way,” and entered this valley just about where Fort Douglass is now established on the bench; we called it Emigration Canyon. We came down here upon this plot of ground in the month of July, and commenced planting a few potatoes. It was very late to put in any corn, but we wished to try the soil to see whether there was any virtue in it. We found it, however, like an ash heap. It seemed as though there had been no rain upon the land for years. We could dig down a great depth in many places, where this city now stands, without finding scarcely any moisture, but we succeeded by taking the water from the creek—City Creek we call it—in flooding a small portion of ground, and put in our potatoes, and planted corn, a few beans, garden seeds, etc., to see if there was any virtue in the soil. What were the results of our first crop? We found that there was fruitfulness in the soil; but of

course it was too late for anything to be matured. The same fall, or autumn of 1847, several thousand of the Latter-day Saints followed up our track. They came upon the land in the fall of the year, bringing with them a little breadstuffs to sustain them during the winter, and also our farm utensils, and everything in the shape of wearing apparel that could be brought. We had not much to bring, for we had already been driven four or five times in the United States, from our houses and from our lands; much of our bedding was burnt; our stores torn down, and the goods carried into the streets and destroyed. Hence, we had not much to bring with us: but we came trusting in our God, and we found that the Lord really fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, and made the wilderness to blossom as the rose, made the desert to bloom like the Garden of Eden—literally fulfilling that which our Gentile religious denominations had been singing in my ears, when I was a youth. Very pleasant song to those who did not understand it, but much more pleasant to those who do understand and are fulfilling it. We made great calculations in laying off this city. We did not lay it off merely one square mile, as if we were doubtful as to whether there would be any inhabitants to occupy it, nor two miles square, but we laid it off, covering an area of about five square miles. We expected that there would be a great emigration. Upon what did we found our expectation? Was it upon our own natural judgment? No; we founded our expectation upon that which God had spoken in the modern revelations which he had given to us as a people. He told us, by revelation, before our prophet was martyred, that we would have to leave the United States: go beyond the Rocky Mountains, and seek our home in the wilderness, and that we would have a great people gather with us. We believed his words; we laid out this city accordingly; and now all that remains for us or strangers to do, in regard to the fulfillment of these expectations, is to ride from one end of this city to the other, and see if there is much spare ground: see if the lots are not pretty generally occupied, and the city pretty well filled with inhabitants. “And he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein.” At first, before the joy and gladness came, this other prophecy was fulfilled: “Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them,” then they cried unto the Lord in their afflictions, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of their distress. It is not necessary for me to enumerate all our privations, such as the shortness of provisions, and how many had to live on the roots that sprang out of the ground; how many had to boil up the hides of their cattle that had transported them across the plains; it is not necessary to enter into all these particulars. I do not know that it is necessary for us even to speak of a great trial of our faith, that we had after we had been here many months. We planted our crops in the spring, and they came up, and were looking nicely, and we were cheered with the hopes of having a very abundant harvest. But alas! it very soon appeared as if our crops were going to be swallowed up by a vast horde of crickets, that came down from these mountains—crickets very different to what I used to be acquainted with in the State of New York. They were crickets nearly as large as a man’s thumb. They came in immense droves, so that men and women with brush could make no head way against them; but we cried unto the Lord in our afflictions, and the Lord heard us, and sent thousands and tens of thousands of a small white bird. I have not seen any of them lately. Many called them gulls, although they were different from the seagulls that live on the Atlantic coast. And what did they do for us? They went to work, and by thousands and tens of thousands, began to devour them up, and still we thought that even they could not prevail against so large and mighty an army. But we noticed, that when they had apparently filled themselves with these crickets, they would go and vomit them up, and again go to work and fill themselves, and so they continued to do, until the land was cleared of crickets, and our crops were saved. There are those who will say that this was one of the natural courses of events, that there was no miracle in it. Let that be as it may, we esteemed it as a blessing from the hand of God; miracle or no miracle, we believe that God had a hand in it, and it does not matter particularly whether strangers believe or not.

We found no city here to dwell in. What did we do? Went to work and began to build a great city. This also was foretold in this same Psalm, “He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.” We found that when we came and began to irrigate the land, and the rains began to descend from the heavens, the earth began to take on a fresh appearance, and the dry ground became like water springs. “And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation.” Now when the Israelites went into Canaan they found cities already prepared, but we had to prepare our own city, “And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.” Now, the Latter-day Saints who have been here,

since the arrival of the first companies in the year 1847, can realize how much the Lord has multiplied this people. We are as it were overrun with children. If strangers will take the opportunity of going to some of our oldest towns, and through our various settlements, they will find vast numbers of children, perhaps more children in our country than in any other country in the United States of the same population. This is very clearly spoken of here, "He blessed them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease." Again he says, in the 41st verse, "Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock." Those that are acquainted with some of our poor men, and when they go and look at one man's family; for this is in the singular number—"he maketh *him* families like a flock"—when we see one man's family like a flock, we may know the Lord has fulfilled this prophecy in regard to the gathering of the Saints in the latter days. "The righteous shall see it, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth." The latter part of the sentence is not yet fulfilled, but the fore part is fulfilled; the righteous hath seen these "families like a flock," and the people greatly multiplied upon the face of the land. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." That is, they are the children of the light. They can see that the Lord our God is fulfilling that which he had purposed to fulfil, when the day for the gathering of his Saints should commence. They can see that that which has occurred corresponds with that which was predicted. Again, they can see how the righteous prosper and flourish; how their cattle increase, and how the Lord has made this wilderness, this desert, this waste country, like the garden of Eden.

Paul, I have no doubt, saw this dispensation of the "fulness of times," or he never would have predicted the great gathering that should then take place, namely "all things in Christ"—notice that expression; not those who are *out* of Christ, not those who have not been *baptized into Christ*; but "all things *in* Christ; both which are in heaven and which are on the earth; even in him."

This forcibly puts me in mind of the parable of our Savior concerning this great latter-day gathering. In the 24th chapter of Matthew he speaks of his second coming "in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory," and how the Gospel should be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, before he should come in his glory. In the next chapter, in order that his disciples might fully understand his sayings, he goes on to explain that at that particular period the kingdom of heaven should be likened unto ten virgins; not the former kingdom that was to be built up, when he came on the earth in the flesh; that was not likened unto ten virgins; but at the time he should commence the great work of gathering, that wheresoever the main body of the kingdom is gathered together, from the four quarters of the earth, preparatory to his second coming, then, at that time, should the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth—(signifying that they did not remain in their native lands) to meet the Bridegroom. It was a literal gathering out; and after they had gathered out, taking their lamps with them, they began to be sleepy, and it is written, "they all slumbered and slept." It was a time to sleep, a time of drowsiness; it is called midnight; but when all was silent, and when probably the world outside was not looking for anything very great, was careless and indifferent, a voice was heard in the depth of this silence, saying, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Then all those virgins awoke, both the wise and the foolish. The wise ones trimmed their lamps, and had some oil left; but the lamps of the foolish had gone out, because there was no oil in them. It seems that they had been so careless, that all the Spirit of God—which may be compared to the oil that gives brightness to the lamps—had gone out of them, and their lamps would not burn. "Well," said they, "what shall we do? We have been expecting the Bridegroom as well as you that are wise; we believed the Gospel, but really we have been too careless; the spirit has been withdrawn from us; there is no oil in our lamps; cannot you give us some? Won't you sell us a little?" "Oh, no," say the wise ones, "we almost fear we have not got enough for ourselves; if you want any, you had better go and buy of those who want to sell." Hence, five that had gathered were foolish, and five were wise. The wise entered in with the Bridegroom, and the door was shut before the foolish ones could get in. But they afterwards arrived and begged to be admitted; and the question was asked. "Who are ye?" "We have been here among your people for a long time. Have we not cast out devils at a certain time? Have we not been on missions? Have we not healed the sick and done many wonderful works in your name?" What is the reply? "I know you not." Why? Because they have apostatized; they have lost the oil out of their lamps; they failed to be prepared for the coming of the Savior. Therefore they were bound, as it were, hand and foot, and delivered over to the wicked world, to suffer the same punishment as those that would not receive the truth, and perhaps even greater.

There is another parable concerning this gathering dispensation. You recollect the Savior, in speaking of the end of the wicked world, in a parable, calls it a time of harvest. Before the time of harvest, there seemed to be a gathering together, and by and by, after this gathering, the tares were plucked out from among the wheat, and cast out in bundles, ready to be burned; but those that were not tares, those that were really wheat, were the ones that were prepared to enter in and partake of the blessing of the Lord. This was spoken, not concerning the former dispensation, but that dispensation immediately preceding the end of the world.

In another very plain parable, concerning the gathering in the last days, the kingdom of heaven is compared—that is the kingdom which should exist in the last days—to a net that should be cast into the sea, and gather of all kinds, both good and bad. They are brought up to the shore, not left in their native ocean or native waters, but brought up to the shore. The bad are cast away, and the good were cast into the vessels. Now, this had reference also to the end of the world. This had reference to the great and last dispensation, when the servants of God will go forth, being commissioned of the Lord of Hosts to gather out his Saints, those that have made a covenant with him by sacrifice, and in the gathering out of these Saints from all the lands of the earth, and from the four quarters thereof, they will gather up a great many that are not good, that will not stand the test; but the bad will be cast out, those who have not on the wedding garment, they will be cast away, and bound hand and foot, as it were, until the end shall come, that is, the final judgment, which will be more than a thousand years after the time of the coming of the Savior.

This same great gathering is characterized also by Daniel, as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands. This stone is represented as a kingdom, and its location is represented as a mountain, showing that there is to be a kingdom of God set up in the last days by the gathering together of his people in an elevated region of country, called a mountain. By and by that stone will roll forth, until the kingdoms of this world are broken in pieces, and as the Prophet Daniel said, the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but shall stand forever; all those other earthly kingdoms, that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, will vanish away, like a night vision, or, in other words, become “like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them.” There are many politicians that are trying to foretell the future. They speak of what this government, and that government, and the other government will be, several hundred years hence, or perhaps in ages hence, as though they could see and understand, naturally, the condition of the various governments and kingdoms of the earth, for a long time to come; but Daniel, who was filled with the Spirit of the living God, saw that all these earthly governments—with the setting up of which God had nothing to do particularly, that is, their founders were neither prophets nor revelators so as to found them upon the principles of the everlasting Gospel—were to vanish away, like the chaff of the summer threshingfloor. And you know how that vanishes, especially when the wind blows strongly. So shall it be with all the governments, kingdoms, powers, republics, and empires upon the face of this globe, except one government, namely, that government which the God of heaven shall establish in the latter days upon the mountains. This is the work of God. It is God that causes these kingdoms to vanish away. It is our God that will cleanse the earth from wickedness. “A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.” He it is that will speak and the wicked shall melt away. He it is that will cause violent whirlwinds to go forth and destroy this, that, or the other city, according to his own will. He it is that will send forth pestilence and plague, and will perform all that has been spoken by the mouth of his prophets, concerning the destruction that is to take place in the latter days.

To prove still more clearly the nature of this great latter-day work of gathering, read the writings of John the Revelator. He saw the introduction of the Gospel in the latter days. He saw “another angel” should bring it. He saw that it should be published to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. He saw that following that angel there would come great and terrible judgments. He saw that after that angel should come with the Gospel, there would come a voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.” This voice from heaven, this new revelation, that was promised by the mouth of John the Revelator, and the sound to all is: “Come out from among these nations. Come out from the four quarters of the earth. Come out from Great Babylon, ‘Mystery, Babylon the Great,’ that you may escape the desolation and plagues that will soon overtake her.” Read concerning the coming of that angel with the Gospel. Read the declaration that that should be the hour

of God's judgment. When the Gospel is preached, it is the last message to the human family, the last warning voice that they will hear before the coming of the Lord. If they receive it, they will flee out from the nations; if they receive it not, then know assuredly that the hour of God's judgment is come, and God himself will judge the people, as written in this 50th Psalm.

But we will not detain you longer. May the Lord bless you. May he pour out his Spirit upon all the faithful of the Latter-day Saints, and if there are any unfaithful ones, numbered with the people of God, may the Spirit of the Lord strive with you, until you shall repent of your unfaithfulness, and become pure, upright, virtuous, and holy before the Lord, that you may be entitled to his Holy Spirit. And if there be any strangers present, this afternoon, who desire to know the truth, we would ask them to search the sacred Scriptures, call upon the name of the Most High God, and he will show you whether these Scriptures are true or not; he will reveal to you whether he has sent his angel from heaven or not; he will give you a testimony that is greater than the testimony of men, provided you will go humbly before him, and call upon him, with all your hearts. Amen.