

Simplicity and Unchangeableness of the Gospel—It Must Be Preached in All the World Before the Savior Comes—Duties and Responsibilities of the Saints

Discourse by Elder Wilford Woodruff, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, Aug. 13, 1876.

In connection with the young brother, Elder Joseph H. Parry, who has just returned from a preaching mission to England, I wish to bear my testimony, and to make a few remarks on the Scripture contained in the last chapter of St. Mark, commencing at the 14th verse, wherein an account is given of the Savior's appearing unto the eleven disciples, and of his upbraiding them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen him after he was risen, etc. At this time the following commission he gave unto them—

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: and they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

It may appear singular to some, why our Elders do not treat on what is termed "the mysteries of the kingdom." I know of no greater mystery to the inhabitants of the earth, than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And yet the Gospel is so plain, and so easy to be understood, that the unlearned and the youth can know of it. The Apostle Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." He considered it of so much importance, that, on another occasion, in writing to the Galatians, he said—"But, though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." From the fact of the Gospel being so simple, of its being adapted to the condition and circumstances of all people, and of its having gone forth by the commandment of the Savior, to all the world, in the event of its being rejected, condemnation must necessarily follow.

Notwithstanding the simplicity of the Gospel, where during the last eighteen hundred years has been the man or the sect that has presented it to the world, as taught by the Savior and his Apostles, before it was revealed from heaven, in fulfillment of ancient prophecies, to the young man Joseph Smith, and preached by him? No voice had ever been heard to proclaim it. There had never been a church or an organization upon the earth, since the days of Christ and his Apostles, directed by the revelations of heaven and owned of God.

The Gospel now being preached to all the world, by commandment of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph, is the same as taught by Adam, Enoch and the Savior. It never changes through lapse of time; its ordinances and laws are always the same, worlds without end. The first principles of the Gospel taught from the dawn of creation, are faith, repentance and baptism, and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost; and they are the same today. To certain minds there might be a mystery connected with these principles. Why, say some, is this so? We can only answer, because it is the law of the great Jehovah, the plan framed in the heavens for the salvation and redemption of man. They are requirements made of the whole human family, which must be obeyed in order that the prevailing mystery may be banished, and the fruits and the blessings of the Gospel enjoyed. The Gospel is free to all; it is without money and without price. But none can officiate in its ordinances, acceptably to God, except those who have received divine authority to do so. For, says the Apostle, no man taketh this honor unto himself, except he be called of God, as was Aaron. But there are a great many Gospels, all claiming to be of Christ, and all differing, more or less, from one another, and from the one taught by the Savior, when upon the earth. When he, who has the authority, preaches the Gospel, he promises, in the name of Jesus Christ, to all that believe and obey, that the Holy Ghost will be given them. By virtue of this promise, all such can know for themselves, whether it is of God, or whether it is of man. If an unauthorized man goes forth, pretending to proclaim this same Gospel, and it matters not how able and talented he may be, his doctrine can be detected, because the promises which were to follow the believers in Christ are not realized, the Holy Ghost which imparts its gifts unto men are not received, and hence the fallacy of the doctrines of men is exposed, so that none need be deceived. Our boys are often called

from the plow and the workshop, to go abroad to the nations to disseminate the principles of the everlasting Gospel. By what power are our young men sustained, who go forth, inexperienced, without much education, presenting in meekness, to a learned and intelligent world, the Gospel of Christ? God, through his angels, attends them; he strengthens their feeble knees, and gives them utterance.

I was once preaching to a large assembly in Collinsville, Connecticut; when I got through, a young clergyman came forward, and asked me if I had received any diploma from college. I answered him, "No." "Do you know," said he, "that a man who has not received a college diploma, has no right to preach?" "No, sir," I said, "I do not know it." "Well, sir," he said, "that is the case." I then asked him to inform me how it was that Jesus preached, without receiving a college diploma? And if such things as college diplomas were ever known or read of in the ministry of Christ and his Apostles?

The Lord chose poor, illiterate fishermen, and sent them forth to combat, and even to confound the wisdom of the wise. His Gospel is represented today, by the weak things of the earth, and has been now for over forty years. And what is the result of our preaching? Let facts speak for themselves. You can behold for yourselves, a people gathered here from the different nations, all prompted by the same motives, namely, to build up and establish Zion on the earth, in fulfillment of the words of God, through the mouths of his Prophets. Why have we been so successful, thus far, in accomplishing so great a work? Simply, because God has confirmed our preaching, and the testimonies we have borne, by conferring the Holy Ghost, with signs following the believers. Had not this been the case, Utah would be today, what it was on the 24th of July, 1847, when the pioneers first set foot on its soil—a barren, desolate land, unfit for the habitation of man. The results of our preaching bespoke the fulfillment of prophecy. Zion has arisen, and some of the prophecies concerning her, recorded in the Old and New Testament, are having their fulfillment.

Angels have visited the earth and delivered the keys of salvation to the Prophet Joseph. He lived long enough to effect a complete organization of the Church, strictly according to the revelations of God to him. God has in our day given gifts to men, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. The Apostle likened the Church unto a perfect body. One part cannot say to the other, I have no need of you; but all the parts are necessary to complete the organization; which is just as necessary to effect the perfection of the Saints of this generation as of any other. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance and baptism for the remission of sin, are absolute requirements, which must be complied with, before the Holy Ghost can be received. These signs, says the Apostle, shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover, etc. These blessings are the right of every honest believer in Christ. They were set in the Church by the Savior, and remain with the Church, as a mighty cloud of witnesses throughout this Territory could testify to; and not only they of this Territory, but those of every land and clime wherever the Gospel has been preached and a Branch of the Church organized. Says the Apostle John, this Gospel is to be preached to all that dwell on the earth, to every nation, and kindred and tongue, and people; as a witness before the second coming of our Savior to dwell on the earth, who will come, not as a lamb to the slaughter, not riding upon a colt, the object of the people's scorn. But he will come in power and great glory, taking vengeance upon them that love and fear him not. We, therefore, are sending glad tidings of great joy to whomsoever will receive them, that they may come up to Zion and escape the judgments that will most assuredly overtake the wicked.

I know that we are engaged in the great latter-day work, the work of the living God. And I know that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God chosen and set apart to usher in this last dispensation of the fullness of times. He has left a record, published, sealed by his own blood, confirming the truth of the same. This testimony is in force to all the world, and it will be in force until the end of time. This we declare is the kingdom which the Prophet Daniel saw in vision, never more to be thrown down or given to another people. In these mountains Zion is to be built up, in fulfillment of prophecy, and every jot and tittle that has been spoken of her must come to pass. The last is first, and the first will be last. The Gospel was first sent directly to the Jews; the Savior himself was of that lineage, through the loins of David. He came to his own, but they received him not. He was reproached of them, from the day of his birth until they crucified him on the cross. Consequently, the risen Redeemer commanded his Apostles to

turn to the Gentiles. They received the work, and enjoyed the gifts and blessings of the Gospel, even the Comforter, the Holy Ghost; and the Priesthood continued with them until a portion of them became unworthy of it, through their falling away, while the faithful were harassed and persecuted to their death. The Gospel is now restored to us Gentiles, for we are all Gentiles in a national capacity, and it will continue with us if we are faithful, until the law is bound, and the testimony sealed, and the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, when it will again revert to the Jews, whom the Lord will have prepared to receive it. They will gather to their own land, taking with them their gold and silver, and will rebuild their city and temple, according to the prediction of Moses and the Prophets. When this time arrives, which is nigh, even at our doors, let the Gentile nations who reject the Gospel which is now sent to them, prepare to meet the judgments of an offended God! For when their cup is full even to the brim, the Lord will then remember the chastisements of the Jews, his favored people, and at whose hands they will have received double for their iniquities. Offenses must come, said the Savior, but woe unto them by whom they come. Woe unto the Gentiles, who have administered afflictions to the Jews for these many years! Woe unto them if they now reject this only means of salvation, for the awful calamities spoken of in these books, the Bible and Book of Mormon, will certainly befall them.

The principle of gathering has been preached for the past thirty-seven years. Before this principle was preached by the Elders, a great many of the people had received the spirit of it; and the consequence was, that no sooner had it been taught by the Presidency of the Church, than the people everywhere were ready to receive it. It had been revealed to them by the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to reveal that which is past, present, and that which is to come, and no surer, stronger testimony can be given to anyone than it affords. We have gathered here for the express purpose of establishing Zion, which, according to the Scriptures, must be before the Gospel can be sent to the Jews. Passage after passage might be found in the Bible, referring to our coming here; the casting up of the highway on which the ransomed of the Lord might travel; the building of our city in a low place, which was to be called Sought out, a city not forsaken; and how the Lord would cause springs of water to spring up, and the desert to blossom like the rose, etc., all of which have had their fulfillment. But how do the inhabitants of the earth regard these things? With great indifference. In fact it would be a marvel to me were it otherwise, for according to the predictions, the people in this age were to be like unto the people of the days of Noah and Lot, marrying and giving in marriage, practicing all manner of wickedness and abominations, and wholly unprepared for the coming of the Son of Man. The Jews were under no condemnation for rejecting the Savior, until he appeared amongst them as the light of the world, then they had no longer a cloak for their sins; and in rejecting him, and those who were sent unto them, they stood condemned before the Lord, and, consequently, his threatened judgments overtook them. The people who heard not the Gospel preached from the days of the Apostles until its restoration in our day, are under no condemnation for rejecting the Gospel during the time it had been taken from the earth. But the light again has dawned upon the world, and the Elders of Israel are engaged proclaiming it far and wide, and as it was with the Jews, so it will be with the Gentiles who reject it, for the predictions at God's Prophets must have their fulfillment, and neither you nor I can prevent it if we would. We are charged with being uncharitable, because we proclaim these things. We are not to blame—we are merely the creatures used by the Almighty in doing his bidding. The work is his, the plan of salvation is the creation of his superior wisdom, not ours.

Let me say to my brethren and sisters, our responsibilities are great, far greater than the outside world who reject the Gospel. We have received the light, the knowledge of God; we are under sacred covenants to stand by the truth, and by one another in righteousness. If we are found traitors to the cause, crucifying the Son of Man afresh, great will be our condemnation. Our time allotted us to tarry here below is short; but our spirits are eternal, and will live forever, and our future destiny depends on this our earthly career. The Lord has given his angels charge concerning us; they are our friends, and their eyes are over us. They stand in waiting with sharp sickles in their hands, ready to go forth and reap down the earth. Our calling is to perfect ourselves, to purify Zion, and make it a fit habitation for the Son of God when he comes; to build Temples, and in them perform the rites and ordinances for the living and the dead, and accomplish all that God designs us to do. And that we may be faithful in the performance thereof, is my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.