The Signs of the Coming of the Son of Man—The Saints' Duties

Discourse by Elder Wilford Woodruff, delivered in the 13th Ward Assembly Rooms, Salt Lake City, January 12, 1873.

My address this afternoon will be intended for those who profess to be Latter-day Saints—those who have entered into covenant with the Lord our God. I am surrounded with those who know by experience that we are dependent upon the influence and inspiration of the Holy Ghost to enable us to teach the things of the kingdom of God. My faith is that no man, in this or any other generation, is able to teach and edify the inhabitants of the earth without the inspiration of the Spirit of God. As a people we have been placed in positions the last forty years which have taught, in all our administrations and labors, the necessity of acknowledging the hand of God in all things. We feel this necessity today. I know that I am not qualified to teach either the Latter-day Saints or the world without the Spirit of God. I desire this this afternoon, and also your faith and prayers, that my mind may be led in a channel which may be beneficial to you. In my public teaching I never permit my mind to follow in any channel except that which the Spirit dictates to me, and this is the position we all occupy when we meet with the Saints, or when we go forth to preach the Gospel. As Jesus told his Apostles, Take no thought what ye shall say, it is told us, Take no thought what we shall say; but we treasure up in our minds words of wisdom by the blessing of God and studying the best books.

We are told in the 24th chapter of Matthew that Jesus, on a certain occasion, taught his disciples many things concerning his Gospel, the Temple, the Jews, his second coming and the end of the world; and they asked him—Master, what shall be the sign of these things? The Savior answered them, but in a very brief manner. As my mind runs a little in that channel, I feel disposed to read a portion of the word of the Lord unto us, which explains this matter more fully than the Savior explained it to his disciples. That portion of the word of the Lord which I shall read, is a revelation given to the Latter-day Saints, March 7, 1831, forty-two years ago next March. It commences on the 133rd page of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

[The speaker read the revelation, and then resumed his remarks as follows]:

I want to ask who are looking for the fulfillment of these events, and who upon the earth are preparing themselves for the fulfillment of the word of the Lord through the mouths of Prophets, Patriarchs and Apostles for the last six thousand years? Nobody that I have any knowledge of, without it is the Latter-day Saints, and I for one feel that we are not half so much awake as we ought to be, and not half as well prepared as we ought to be for the tremendous events which are coming upon the earth in quick succession in these latter days. Who can the Lord expect to prepare for his second coming but his Saints? None. Why? Because, as is said in this revelation, light has come forth to the inhabitants of the earth, and they have rejected it, because their deeds are evil. This message has been proclaimed among the Christian nations of Europe and America, and in many other nations for the past forty years. Inspired men—the Elders of Israel—have gone forth without purse or scrip declaring the Gospel of life and salvation to the nations of the world, but they have rejected their testimony, and condemnation rests upon them therefor. As the Prophet said, "Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people." Who believes in the fulfillment of prophecy and revelation? Who, among priests and people today, has any faith in the sayings of Jesus Christ? If there be any people besides the Saints whose eyes are open to the great events which will soon overtake the nations, I would like to know and visit them. I would to God that the eyes of the Latter-day Saints were open far more than they are to those things that rest upon them! The Lord is looking to them alone to build up his Zion here in the mountains of Israel, and to prepare the bride, the Lamb's wife, for the coming of the Great Bridegroom. I believe in the fulfillment of the revelations which the Lord has given to us, as much as I believe that I have a soul to save or lose, or as much as I believe in the shining of the sun in the firmament of heaven. Why? Because every word that God has ever spoken, whether by his own voice out of the heavens, by the ministration of angels, or by the mouths of inspired men, has been fulfilled to the very letter as far as time has permitted. We have fulfilled many of the sayings of the Prophets of God. The revelation I have read this afternoon was given forty-two years ago. Has there been any sound of war since then? Has there been any sound of war in our land since that period? Has there been any standard lifted up to the nations, any gathering together of the people into these mountains of Israel from nearly all nations? There has. We have had a beginning, the fig tree is

leafing, putting faith its leaves in the sight of all men, and the signs in both heaven and earth all indicate the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When my mind, under the influence of the Spirit of God, is open to comprehend these things, I many times marvel and wonder, not only at the world but also at ourselves, that we are not more anxious and diligent in preparing ourselves and our families for the events now at our doors, for though the heavens and the earth pass away, not one jot or tittle of the word of the Lord will go unfulfilled. There is no prophecy of Scripture that is of any private interpretation, but holy men of God spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and their words will be fulfilled on the earth.

We are approaching an important time. As Jesus once said, The world hate me, and without a cause, therefore I have chosen you out of the world, and the world hate you also. The servant is not above his master, you are not above me, they have hated me and they will hate you. The Lord has chosen the Latter-day Saints, and through them has sent a message to all nations under heaven. The Zion of God is opposed by priest and people in every sect, party and denomination in Christendom. The Elders of Israel have been called from the plow, plane, hammer and the various occupations of life, to go forth and bear record of these things to the world. We have followed this up until the present time for more than forty-two years—forty-three years next April. The kingdom has steadily grown, and while we have labored we have seen the fulfillment of the word of the Lord. The sea has gone beyond its bounds, there have been earthquakes in divers places, and there have also been wars and rumors of wars. These are only a beginning, their fullness had not yet opened upon the sons of men, but it is at their doors; it is at the doors of this generation and of this nation. And when the world rise up against the kingdom of God in these latter days, should the Saints have any fears? Should we fear because men, in their secret chambers, concoct plans to overthrow the kingdom of God? We should not. There is one thing we should do, and that is, pray to God. Every righteous man has done this, even Jesus the Savior, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, had to pray, from the manger to the cross, all the way through; every day he had to call upon his Father to give him grace to sustain him in his hour of affliction and to enable him to drink the bitter cup. So with his disciples. They were baptized with the same baptism that he was baptized with; they suffered the same death that he died, being crucified as he was. They sealed their testimony with their blood. Never– theless all that Jesus said concerning the Jews has had its fulfillment to the present day. This should be a strong testimony to the whole infidel world of the truth of Christ's mission and divinity. Let them look at the Jewish nation and the state of the world, in fulfillment of the words of the Savior eighteen hundred years ago in Jerusalem. It is one of the strongest testimonies in the world of the fulfillment of revelation, the truth of the Bible and the mission of Jesus Christ. The Jews have fulfilled the words of Moses, the prophets and Jesus, up to the present day. They have been dispersed and trampled under the feet of the Gentile world now for eighteen hundred years. When Pontius Pilate wished to release Jesus Christ, saying that he found no fault in that just man, the high priests, scribes, Pharisees and other Jews present on that occasion cried, "Crucify him, and let his blood be upon us and upon our children." Has it not followed them to this day, and been manifest in their dispersion, persecution and oppression through the whole Gentile world for eighteen hundred years? It has. And they have to fulfill the words of the Lord still further. As I have been reading to you today, the Jews have got to gather to their own land in unbelief. They will go and rebuild Jerusalem and their temple. They will take their gold and silver from the nations and will gather to the Holy Land, and when they have done this and rebuilt their city, the Gentiles, in fulfillment of the words of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and other prophets, will go up against Jerusalem to battle and to take a spoil and a prey; and then, when they have taken one-half of Jerusalem captive and distressed the Jews for the last time on the earth, their Great Deliverer, Shiloh, will come. They do not believe in Jesus of Nazareth now, nor ever will until he comes and sets his foot on Mount Olivet and it cleaves in twain, one part going towards the east, and the other towards the west. Then, when they behold the wounds in his hands and in his feet, they will say, "Where did you get them?" And he will reply, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, your Shiloh, him whom you crucified." Then, for the first time will the eyes of Judah be opened. They will remain in unbelief until that day. This is one of the events that will transpire in the latter day.

The Gospel of Christ has to go to the Gentiles until the Lord says "enough," until their times are fulfilled, and it will be in this generation. Forty years have passed since the revelation I have read was given to the sons of men. We are living in a late age, although it is true there are a great many vast and important events to transpire in these

days. But one thing is certain, though the Lord has not revealed the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man shall come, he has pointed out the generation, and the signs predicted as the forerunners of that great event have begun to appear in the heavens and on the earth, and they will continue until all is consummated. If we, as Latter-day Saints, want anything to stir us up, let us read the Bible, Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, they contain enough to edify and instruct us in the things of God. Treasure up the revelations of God and the Gospel of Christ contained therein.

As an individual, I will say that I feel a great responsibility resting upon me, and it also rests upon you. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young alone have not been called to build up in the latter day that great and mighty kingdom of God which Daniel foretold, and which he said should be thrown down no more forever. I say, they were not called to be the only ones to labor in building up that great and glorious Zion, which was to become terrible to all nations; nor their counselors; nor the Twelve Apostles; but this responsibility rests upon every one of the Lord's anointed upon the face of the earth, I do not care who they are, whether male or female, and the Lord will require this at the hands of all the Latter-day Saints. I therefore desire that we may be awake to these subjects, and to the position we occupy before God and in the world.

The inhabitants of the earth may hate and oppose us, as they did Jesus Christ, and as they have all inspired men, as they did Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the prophets who ever lived. They have always been a thorn in the flesh to the world. Why? Because they had enough independence of mind to rebuke sin, to maintain the promises of God unto man, and to proclaim the declarations of the Almighty unto the inhabitants of the earth, fearless of consequences. The last song sung here was, "Do what is right, let the consequence follow." That is what I say to the Latter-day Saints. Let us do what is right, maintain our religion before God, be valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ, and prepare ourselves for his coming, for it is near, and this is what God requires at our hands. He leans upon no other people; he expects from no people but those who have obeyed his Gospel and gathered here, the accomplishment of his great work, the building up of his latter-day Zion and kingdom. And, as I have said, this responsibility rests not only upon Prophets and Apostles, but upon every man and woman who has entered into covenant with him. I say that we are too near asleep, we are not half awake to the position that we occupy before God, and the responsibilities we are under to him. We should be on the watchtower.

Who is going to be prepared for the coming of the Messiah? These men who enjoy the Holy Ghost and live under the inspiration of the Almighty, who abide in Jesus Christ and bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God. No other people will be. There never was a more infidel generation of Christians on the face of the earth than there is today. They do not expect that God will do anything in a temporal point of view towards the fulfillment of his promises; they are not looking forward for the establishment of his kingdom, or for the building up of his Zion on the earth. Their eyes are closed to these things, because they have rejected the light. When Joseph Smith brought this Gospel to the world, there was a great deal more faith in God, a great deal more faith in his revelations, and, according to the light they had, a great deal more pure and undefiled religion than there is now. We have carried the Gospel to all Christian nations who would permit us, and they have rejected it, and they are under condemnation. Our own nation is under condemnation on this account. This land, North and South America, is the land of Zion, it is a choice land—the land that was given by promise from old father Jacob to his grandson and his descendants, the land on which the Zion of God should be established in the latter days. We have been fulfilling the prophecies concerning it, for the last forty years. We have come up here and established the kingdom. True, it is small today, it may be compared to a mustard seed, but as the Lord our God lives, the little one will become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation, and the Lord Almighty will hasten it in his own time, and the world will learn one thing in this generation, and that is, that when they fight against Mount Zion, they fight against the decrees of the Almighty and the principles of eternal life.

I rejoice before God that I have lived to hear the principles of eternal life proclaimed to the sons of men; I rejoice that I have lived to see this people gathered together, I rejoice in coming to the land of Zion with the Saints of God. When we came here twenty-four years ago, we were a little handful of men, pioneers; we came to a parched and barren desert. Since then we have built up six hundred miles of cities, towns, villages, gardens, farms and orchards; and while doing this we have had to contend with the opposition of both priest and people. Have they

prevailed? They have not, and they will not. Why? Because he who sits in the heavens, the Lord our God, has decreed certain things and they will come to pass; because the Lord is watching over the interests of this people. He requires us to work with him, he is at work for us. It is our duty to build these temples here—this in Salt Lake City, another in St. George, in Logan or wherever they may be needed for the benefit of the Saints of God in the latter days. I think many times that many of us will get to heaven before we shall want to go there. If we were to go there today, many would meet their friends in the spirit world and it would be a reproach to them, for you, Latter-day Saints, in one sense of the word, hold in your hands the salvation of your dead, for we can do much for them. But I think many times that our hearts are too much set on the vain things of the world to attend to many important duties devolving upon us connected with the Gospel. We are too much after gold and silver, and we give our hearts and attention to temporal matters at the expense of the light and truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have not much time to spare as a people, for a great work is required at our hands. I know that, without the power of God, we should not have been able to do what has been done; and I also know that we never should be able to build up the Zion of God in power, beauty and glory were it not that our prayers ascends into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth, and he hears and answers them. The world has sought our overthrow from the beginning, and the devil does not like us very well. Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, does not like the idea of revelation to the Saints of God, and he has inspired the hearts of a great many men, since the Gospel was restored to the earth, to make war against us. But not one of them has made anything out of it yet—neither glory, immortality, eternal life nor money. No man or people ever did make anything by fighting against God in the past, and no man or people will ever make anything by taking that course in the future.

This is the work and kingdom of God; this is the Zion of God and the Church of Christ, and we are called by his name. The Latter-day Saints have to abide in Christ, and we cannot do that unless we bring forth fruit, any more than the branch of the vine can unless it abide in the vine. To abide in Christ we must enjoy the Spirit of God, that our minds may be enlightened to comprehend the things of God. When I look at the history of the Church of God in these latter days I many times marvel at what has been done and how we have progressed, considering the traditions, unbelief, failings, follies and nonsense that man is heir to in the flesh. We have had a great many traditions to overcome and the opposition of the world to contend with from the beginning until today. Brethren and sisters, we should be faithful. The Lord has put into our hands the power to build up his Zion and kingdom on the earth, and we have more to encourage us than was ever possessed by any generation that has preceded us. We have the privilege of building up a kingdom that will stand forever. Noah and the Antediluvian world did not have this privilege. Enoch built up the Zion of God a little while, and the Lord took it away. Jesus and the Apostles came here. Jesus fulfilled his mission, preached the Gospel, was rejected by the Jews, and was crucified. His disciples had a similar fate, and the Gospel was taken to the Gentile nation, with all its gifts and blessings and power, and Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles warned them to take heed lest they, in turn, should lose it through their unbelief.

You know how it has been with them—that there has been a falling away, and that for seventeen hundred years the voice of a Prophet or Apostle has not been heard in the world; and now again, in these latter days, the Lord Almighty, remembering his promises made from generation to generation, has sent Angels from heaven to restore to man the Gospel and has given authority to administer the same. The Revelator John, says he saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, Saying with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give glory to him who made the heavens, the earth, the seas and the fountains of waters, for the hour of God’s judgment has come.”

Oh! ye Gentile nations, wake up and prepare yourselves for that which is to come, for as God lives his judgments are at your door. They are at the door of our nation, and the thrones and kingdoms of the whole world will fall, and all the efforts of men combined cannot save them. It is a day of warning, but not of many words, to the nations. The Lord is going to make a short work, or no flesh could be saved. If it were not for the manifestation of the power of God what would be the fate of his Zion and people? The same as in the days of Christ and his Apostles. The Lord has had Zion before his face from before the foundation of the world, and he is going to build it up. “Who am I,” saith the Lord, “that I promise and do not fulfill?” The Lord never made a promise to the sons of men which he has

not fulfilled, therefore Latter-day Saints, you have all the encouragement in the world to sustain you in the faith that the Zion of God will remain on the earth. The work is in our hands to perform, the God of heaven requires it of us and if we fail to build it up we shall be under condemnation, and the Lord would remove us out of the way and he would raise up another people who would do it. Why? Because the Almighty has decreed that this work shall be performed on the earth, and no power on earth or in hell can hinder it.

I would here say to our delegate to Congress, when you go to Washington, have no fears with regard to the opposition of men. You have every reason to go in confidence, and do your duty, knowing that the Lord will stand by you, and so has every man in the Church and kingdom of God. I care not where we are placed or what God requires at our hands. He is at the helm, and he has protected us until today. Where should we have been a few years ago when the army was sent to destroy us, if it had not been for the protection of the Almighty? We should not have been here. And so it will be in days to come. The world hate us because the Almighty has called us out from the world to proclaim his Gospel and build up his kingdom. Let us be faithful, for the Lord is going to protect us, and build up Zion. He will also gather Israel, rebuild Jerusalem and prepare the way for his second coming, in the clouds of heaven. Then let us, Latter-day Saints, wake up to our duty. Think nothing too hard that the Lord requires of us. Let us build this Temple that we may attend to the ordinances for the living and the dead. If we do not do this we shall be sorry. When I see men who have received the word of God, and tasted the powers of the world to come, and then turn away, I think of the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins. It will pay us to be wise and to have oil in our lamps, to have fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and to live our religion and keep the commandments of God day by day. Brethren are passing away. I have been away three or four weeks on a visit to the people in the upper settlements, and since my return I hear of this man and that man dead, whom I saw well and hale before I went away. So it will be with us in a little while. We shall pass away and go to the other side of the veil, and the burden of the building up of Zion will rest upon our sons and daughters. Then rejoice in the Gospel of Christ. Rejoice in the principles of eternal life. I am looking for the fulfillment of all things that the Lord has spoken, and they will come to pass as the Lord God lives. Zion is bound to rise and flourish. The Lamanites will blossom as the rose on the mountains. I am willing to say here that, though I believe this, when I see the power of the nation destroying them from the face of the earth, the fulfillment of that prophecy is perhaps harder for me to believe than any revelation of God that I ever read. It looks as though there would not be enough left to receive the Gospel; but notwithstanding this dark picture, every word that God has ever said of them will have its fulfillment, and they, by and by, will receive the Gospel. It will be a day of God's power among them, and a nation will be born in a day. Their chiefs will be filled with the power of God and receive the Gospel, and they will go forth and build the new Jerusalem, and we shall help them. They are branches of the house of Israel, and when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and the work ceases among them, then it will go in power to the seed of Abraham.

Brethren and sisters, let us remember our position before the Lord! Let us try and keep the faith, let us labor for the Holy Spirit, that our hearts, minds and eyes may be opened, that we may live by inspiration, that when we see dark clouds rising and evils strewing our path, we may be able to overcome. The Savior was tempted, so were his Apostles, and if we have not been we shall be. As the Lord told Joseph Smith, "I will try and prove you in all things, even unto death. If you are not willing to abide my covenants unto death, you are not worthy of me." Did Joseph abide unto death? I think he did, and he with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, will sit at the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, and will receive his glory and crown. He was true and faithful unto death, and his testimony is in force today, in language as loud as ten thousand thunders. Whether it is believed or rejected it will have its fulfillment on the heads of this generation.

By and by great Babylon will fall and there will be wailing, mourning and sore affliction in her midst. The sons of Zion have got to stand in holy places to be preserved in the midst of the judgments that will shortly overtake the world. We can see how fully the revelation, calling us to go to the western countries, has been fulfilled. In less than forty years, a standard has been lifted up, and people gathered here from France, England, Scotland, Wales, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and almost all the nations of the earth in fulfillment of that revelation. When it was given no man among us knew anything about Salt Lake or the Rocky Mountains; but it has been fulfilled before our eyes. We have come up here, and in so doing have fulfilled the revelations of God so far. Let us continue, I pray

God my heavenly Father that he will bless the Latter-day Saints; that he will give us his Holy Spirit and wisdom, that our eyes may be opened, that we may have faith in the things of God. Let a man lose the Holy Spirit and what faith has he? None, either in God or in his revelations, and that is what is the matter today. You may take the best friends we have outside of this kingdom, and you can hardly get them to believe that God has any– thing to do with the affairs of men, or that he has power to do anything for them, either as individuals or nations. If their eyes were open one moment they would understand that God holds them all in the hollow of his hand, weighs them in the balance and that they cannot make a move without his permission. They would no longer wonder why the Latter-day Saints have faith in God if their eyes were open so that they could understand the work and things of God. They cannot understand it, they cannot even see the kingdom of God unless they are born of the Spirit of God, and they cannot enter into it unless they are born of the water and the Spirit, according to the words of Jesus to Nicodemus.

I have a desire that we may be faithful in our mission and ministry, as Elders of Israel and as Saints of God, that we may do our duty, and maintain our position before the Lord. Let our prayers go up before him. If I have any *forte* it is prayer to God. We are not called to build up Zion by preaching, singing and praying alone; we have to perform hard labor, labor of bone and sinew, in building towns, cities, villages; and we have to continue to do this; but while we are so engaged, we should not sin. We have no right to sin, whether we are in the canyon drawing wood, or performing any other hard labor, and we should have the Spirit of God to direct us then as much as when preaching, praying, singing and attending to the ordinances of the house of God. If we do this as a people we shall grow in the favor and power of God. We should be united together, it is our duty to be so. Our prayers should ascend before God, and I know they do. I know that President Young is prayed for—I know that his Counselors and the Twelve are prayed for, and that the Church and kingdom of God is prayed for. We should continue this, and if we pray in faith we shall have what we ask for. The Lord has taught us to pray, and I rejoice that I have learned to pray according to the order of God, for in this we have a promise—that where two or three agree in asking for any thing that is just and right, it shall be granted unto them.

May God bless you! May he give us wisdom, and his Holy Spirit, to guide us, that we may be enabled to be true and faithful to our covenants, and be prepared to inherit eternal life, for Jesus' sake. Amen.