PART 2 DESERET EVENING NEWS. 9 TO 12

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

SATURDAY, MAY 2, 1896, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

Times and Seasons.

Discourse Delivered at the General Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Morning, April 5th, 1896, by

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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

After the very precious instructions that we have been listening to from our First Presidency in the Church and in the Priesthood, I feel, on being called upon to speak, as though it was not following the rule of giving the best of the best of the best, but being then called, I desire to give my testimony with the rest of my brethren. And in this vast congregation, while it is difficult for us to make all hear, I would ask the people kindly to be as quiet as they can, so that we may speak of so low, and I will try to speak so as to be heard, and if the Lord pleases to give us a generous measure of His Holy Spirit we may still be edified.

I have been exceedingly refreshed by the instructions of yesterday and today, and I realize that it is an instructive, interesting and important time in which we live; and if we can but understand the importance of the times and the circumstances that surround and attend upon us, no person who possesses the spirit of Zion can be otherwise than happy and rejoice in the multitude of the tender mercies of our God which He is bestowing upon His people. It was said by an ancient wise man that "there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven." There is a time to sow and a time to reap, a time to plant and a time to gather. There are times when it appears as if all nature was by the hand of fire not only hidden up, but when the severity is so great that it seems as if it must be killed outright, and that vegetation could not stay in the spring. Then again we see the opposite extreme in the summer, when the heat is so great that human flesh and blood faints and subsides before it. Now, when we look at the great work of the Lord in the last days, there is quite a similarity in the course of God's providences to His people to what there is in the course of the seasons of the revolving years. The work of the Lord has had its times of refreshing and sunshine, of sowing and of maturing, and reaping the plentiful, the bountiful, the glorious harvest; is the tragedy of God for instance, as they have been completed and dedicated, and as we have received the blessings of heaven therein. While on the other hand there have been times of persecution, affliction, sorrow and distress, until to all outward appearance it would seem as if the tree of life which God had planted in the earth had been almost frozen to death.

Such was a time in Missouri, when the Prophet and his immediate associates were in a prison together; and other brethren by the score were in other prisons, when the voice of the military tribunals told us we need never expect to see our homes and our families, we were, with all military sternness informed that we must locate as other people locate, and never organize again in ward and stake, under bishops and presidents. The consummation of that serious event looked like destruction for the Church. We were banished from the state, and it took all that winter with all the brethren could do to help everybody get out from those distressing conditions and into the State of Illinois. That spring opened. There was found a feeling of kindness, benevolence and generosity on the part of the good people of the City of Quincy and the region round about; brethren came and went, took up farms, worked them upon shares, hired out, and did whatever they could to sustain life, get their families located, and overcome the adversities of the previous year.

What was the result? As the spring weather opened to them, they got situations and labor. In a little while the Prophet Joseph came along, having been delivered by the Almighty power of God, also his brother Hyrum, and the brethren of the Apostles. Directly the work of the Lord began to prosper. Brother Joseph purchased a place for Nauvoo, bought our Commerce, because it was so sickly that other people could not live there. Nauvoo was built up in the short space of seven years, and a temple was built there which cost about a million dollars. That was a place of refuge for the saints. Our Elders went everywhere preaching the word, explaining to the people around them the faith that we were persecuted for and driven from state to state, telling them what was the cause of the terrible frosty winter that we had been passing through; and it had its effect. Many people were gathered in. Nauvoo became a glorious city. People came from New Orleans, from New York and from Canada to find out and hear the word of the Prophet Joseph, and to see what these people were doing, because they made the welkin ring from morning till night with the saw and hammer, building up that beautiful place.

Well, before the temple was completed our Prophet laid down his life, having been led like a lamb to the slaughter. But the work of the Lord went on. Our treaties with our enemies allowed us a certain period to get our wagons together, and another terrible winter set in upon us. We had the snowy over the prairies of Iowa, the period of sickness, the cold of the winter, the suffering in Winter Quarters; and we journeyed over the plains as Israel—Israel in the wilderness—the kingdom of God on wheels—for about ten years, till we arrived in this "great American desert"—a country of sagebrush, greasewood, waives and Indians. We got here and winter began to break again. A little experience soon taught us that the Lord would bless and prosper us and make the earth fruitful for our sakes, after striving to keep His commandments and to do His will. We had hardly got located here, however, before we thought that we could spend the 24th of July and have a good dinner under a bowery, when at the following conference the Twelve were started off—President Lorenzo Snow to Italy, Erastus Snow to Denmark, John Taylor to France and Germany, and Franklin D. Richards to England. The Elders went abroad everywhere preaching the Gospel, and found people willing to hear. What was the matter with the people, devoted to their own notions and having to become a people to themselves? And yet the Gospel spread abroad. In England and other foreign countries, thousands were added to the Church by the thousands and tens of thousands in wonderful rapidity. The work of the Lord prospered, and we had another summer time to a certain extent, locating settlements all over the country and building our temples. Then behold, another winter set in.

You know, winters are not always of the same temperature. We sometimes have a winter that freezes so hard that bark on the trees becomes loose, and then we have other winters that are mild. Well, we had a super set in here that was so severe that nearly all manner of business was closed up—except the marshals, the attorneys, the courts and the peace officers; they were about the only line of prosperous business that was done here during that winter of some six to twelve years ago. Now, the Lord has seemed to cause these things to work in this way. It seems to be a natural periodic state that we pass through from time to time. It happened that during this winter, when we could not be allowed preaching the Gospel our yes must know our Elders went sometimes clear to the sea and back again and reported that they could not get a house to speak in anywhere, not even a congregation out of doors; the supreme court in Washington had our leading men's character brought up there and canvassed, and the decisions of those courts were published and have gone abroad in the court reports into all the spheres of legal life throughout this country and the world; and so we became adversified while we were staying around at home and away from home taking care of ourselves as best we could, we were making acquaintances through the attorneys and the courts in the higher circles of life.

When this had been going on for some months and years, there was a council held down East, and our leading ladies were invited to join the National Council of women, in Washington and they reported the Relief Societies, &c., and those reports were published in the papers and books, which have gone to all the United States of America and Union, and in a higher circle than merely those that are plowing and sowing, the mechanics, &c. These means the Lord employed during the hard period of our winter. It was not very much the "winter of discontent" after all. He made us to become known among the people. They could take their books and hear over the decisions of the law courts, and they could read the reports of the grand Council of Women from all parts of the world, and quietly learn something about us.

Directly there was a greatcall for all the inhabitants of the earth to come to Chicago and celebrate the World's Columbian Exposition. At this Exposition there came commissioners from all civilized countries; many of them got a chance to talk with our brethren and sisters in Chicago, and a number of them came to Salt Lake City. We gave them copies of our Church works and of the History of Utah, which they carried off with them to their homes, and they have no doubt been reading over these things in the work has been going on. Our dear sisters and brethren on the chief went down and really put the country on its mettle in music. Thus we got some of the fine arts before the people of the earth. The Presidency went along also, and as has been shown you this morning, the Mayor of Independence welcomed them and accompanied them to the hall where they could exchange congratulations with the Mayor.

These things have been going on until, I want to say to you brethren and sisters, and especially the Elders of Israel, springtime seems to be in our land again; and as the earth, after the frosts and snows of winter, is being broken up and pulverized and prepared for the seed, so calls are coming from all parts of the earth for Elders. "Where can we find an Elder?" "If you have an Elder coming this way, please direct him to our place." Calls are being made, and the people of the earth are now ready to hear the Gospel. I want to tell this region of Seventies that are before us—the hosts of Israel, if you please, and the multitudes of the Elders' quorum, that the time has come when the inhabitants of the earth want the Gospel, want to know what it is that we have been making such a fuss about in the earth, keeping the courts busy and the penitentiary full. They want us to send some Elders along, that they can ask questions of them, and that the Gospel may be explained unto them. We have calls for Elders from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth. The time has come when we must rise up and saw—go forth and scatter the Gospel seeds throughout the lands. The inhabitants of the earth are ready to hear it, and it is our duty and it is inside the duty of the Twelve Apostles, and especially you have made it the duty of the missionary committee, to hunt up Elders and send them abroad to preach the Gospel. We have had a good deal of difficulty to find them as fast as they have been wanted. One mission in the South called for one hundred extra Elders. We have a thousand or more in the field, but there is wanted a great multitude yet to go everywhere, and we are seeking through Israel, almost with lighted candles, to find men of suitable spirit and faith—men that can go and preach the word of God to the people of the earth. There never has been a time when we have been so able to do it as at the present time. I know one says, "I am coming everything," saying "I am a little in debt" &c. Arrange these things from this day forth, as if you knew you had to go on a mission. Then when you are ready to go, you will be ready to stay if you are not wanted. I do not want you to think it is a difficult thing. We do not ask anybody to go on mission until they can go reasonably and consistently with the spirit of the Gospel, with the faith of their kindred and with the blessings of their Bishops and Presidents. Many of our Presidents Young, Woodruff, Snow and others that are around me, were called upon to go and preach the Gospel, and had nothing to get with, we went whether we could or not. You do not have to do that today; you are given time to go consistently and comfortably. Don't give yourselves up, but we need Elders to go and preach the Gospel; for now is the time when the desire of the people is upon to receive it. It is the sending forth of Israel to gather unto this Gospel to the nations of the earth, laid especially upon the Twelve Apostles, with the First Presidency to see that it is carried out.

Think what the Lord is doing for us! A little while ago we were as spoken lovingly by the government, and it the Lord half had come to our rescue by the decisions of our courts in some of our cases, but