

ZION'S ADVOCATE

"And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and power of the Holy Ghost." 1st Nephi 3:124

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A FEW THOUGHTS ON SOME OF THE PROPHECIES

Nephi says that in the last days men would insist that "all is well in Zion," and the inference is that all would not be well. While Nephi may have depicted the attitude prevailing in christendom generally, other prophetic statements indicate that in a more particular sense, with reference to specific Zion, all would not be well. In the light of these statements it might be profitable for us, though we consider we have been called out, to consider carefully Nephi's warning, "Wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion."

The Lord has spoken in these last days promising to raise up a man like Moses to lead his people "out of bondage." Considerable speculation has been had as to what this startling expression could mean. It has been thought by some to refer to the economic pressure under which we labor in the world. The writer does not agree with that interpretation. Temporal conditions reflect the spiritual condition. When we are what we should be spiritually, we will be doing what God told us to do temporally. In other words, if the spiritual condition is right, the temporal will be, also. The important thing is the spiritual aspect. If that is not favorable for our development, we need help along that line, and the writer believes that spiritual deliverance is the thought intended to be conveyed by the language quoted. This conclusion is justified by that remarkable prophecy, which is referred to so often, and is as follows:

"And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the sceptre of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritance of the saints, whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God."—Church History, Vol. 1, page 260.

The outstanding thought in the above declaration is that the messenger spoken of will be sent to set the house of God in order. Further evidence in support of this deduction is furnished in the parable of Zenos, where we are told that just prior to the time when the gospel goes to Israel the fruit of the vineyard is all bad; it is condemned by the Master of the vineyard, in fact. Out of the entire situa-

tion he finds only "a few" that he can use, and he instructs his servant to call them out and get them ready for service, for being sent to Israel.

It is interesting to meditate upon how "the few" will be gathered together so that they can combine and unify their forces for service. The question has been asked, "Will they be organized?" How are they going to manage to work harmoniously with the main body, or will it be possible for them to do their work in connection with the main body?

How is the "one mighty and strong" going to contrive to do his work?

"Oh, that will be easy," someone may say; "he will be the leader of the church, of course."

But when you look into that idea, you will see how it conflicts with itself. How can the body be permitted to get out of order and be set in order by the same individual? Obviously the one who gets things out of order will not be the one to set them in order. Someone has said that the prophets of old were never representatives of the official religion. Certainly they were never very welcome to the reigning authorities, because they always came condemning popular ideas and existing conditions. Reformers have never made much headway with established institutions. They have always been compelled to work with the minority. The Moses man is going to deliver those who will follow him **out of bondage**. Is there a suggestion for us here, that may throw a glint of light on this interesting question of How?

The idea has prevailed to a considerable extent that we can do but little until "the one mighty and strong" comes. The result of this reasoning has been to discourage effort. The prophecy says, however, that he will "set in order the house of God." That looks as if something had been done with a view to getting ready, for where the messenger is received he has been expected. If a house is devoid of furniture, there is nothing to be placed in order. Were we so fortunate as to be able to secure the services of an expert on interior arrangement, we would try to have our draperies, furniture and everything ready. It seems reasonable to suppose that some preparation has been made for the "one mighty and strong;" that preparation has been carried as far as opportunity and understanding would permit. The prophecy implies that the messenger finds faithfulness and obedience, for he

rewards those whose names are found "enrolled in the book of the law of God." If we wait for the "one mighty and strong" to come and do it all, the probability is that we will continue to wait, for he will surely pass us by. We have intelligence. We ought to know that we always have the consent and approval of our Heavenly Father to move out along the lines of his law and do all we can, go as far as the light we have enables us. If we cannot do what the Lord requires where we are, and we can find opportunity, why should we not move out? When we came to the realization that the faith of our parents was not the gospel in its fullness, did we wait to be commanded? It is always our privilege to follow the truth, and it is always safe to take truth for our guide.

Again, one hears the belief expressed sometimes that the work of building Zion, establishing equality, etc., will not be done until Christ comes. Satan never put a better lullaby into the heart to rock the conscience to sleep than that idea. If Jesus were coming to do the work himself, why did he restore the gospel to the earth; what mission would the gospel have? How prone men are, when they make a failure of the thing they have been bidden to do, to pass the responsibility on to the Lord. As time goes on, and realization of our shortcoming grows, the tendency is towards discouragement and doubt: a feeling that the work is too much for us, and that Christ will have to come and do it for us. When we listen to that voice, we are listening to a voice that would cheat us of the reward we started out to win when we engaged in this latter day work. Instead of doubting that the work will be done, it would be better to search the prophecies to find out how it is going to be accomplished, that we may co-operate with God in the matter. If we will go to the storehouse of knowledge, the books, we will find that the Lord foresaw the apparent defeat that confronts us, and made provision for the rescue and triumph of his work. Let us not for a moment listen to doubt, but looking to the Lord, let us do all that lies within our power to get ready for that which He is going to do.

"How shall we know 'the one mighty and strong' when he comes?" is nearly always asked when the subject comes up. Years ago two missionaries were traveling together in the West. One was very zealous in declaring that the leader whom he acknowledged was the "one mighty and strong," hoping to impress the people among whom he was laboring with the superiority of his claims over theirs. The other missionary felt uneasy about the position his associate advocated so persistently. One day he said to him: "Our brother — is getting to be an old man now, isn't he?" "Yes," the other answered. "Suppose," the first brother continued, he should die before giving any inheritances; what would you think then?"

The other missionary began to do some thinking right away, evidently, for his associate never heard him advocate that theory again. The lesson is this: The "one mighty and strong" will fulfill the prophecy about him; he will do the work he is sent to do. He will set the house of God in order, and he will "arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints." We might be deceived by demonstrations of power, but when there is light evidenced, wisdom and truth, and the work is performed, will there be room for doubt? We shall doubtless have to exercise our reasoning powers. God never moves in a dazzling, spectacular manner, that takes men off their feet and overpowers their senses. Jesus did not do it when he came. He made his appeal through the Scriptures, showing that he fulfilled them. It was because the Jews did not understand what was written that they were not prepared for the meek and lowly Nazarene. Doubtless the "one mighty and strong" will be recognized only by those who are acquainted with that which is written, and who are sufficiently in touch with the Spirit of God to have their intelligence quickened. Such will be able to discern, to reason, and to recognize.

SYNOPSIS OF A SERMON PREACHED BY C. L. WHEATON, JULY 8, ON THE TEM- PORAL LAW OF THE CHURCH

The speaker emphasized the need of taking the books as our only guide, remarking that private interpretation, or ideas based on any manifestation to us individually that do not accord with the books, could only lead to disorder and confusion. The only basis for unity is the law of God as revealed in the standard books of the church, and we should diligently seek to understand that which is written, instead of following any notions of our own. The Church of Christ must be governed by the law of God as revealed in his written word, and not by any human code or creed or measure of expediency. He spoke about the play upon the meaning of tithing, how it is variously construed, but showed that according to the scriptures and all authoritative definitions of the word, it has but one meaning, viz., a tenth. This does not mean to live first and tithe afterwards. The principle is illustrated in the history of Israel. They were required to give the first fruits. If God had intended for us to do any differently, he would have used a different term than tithing, since he says he speaks after the manner of our language, that we may understand him. (See Book of Commandments, 1:5.) While the history of Israel shows how tithing was understood and carried out, tithing is not a doctrine that is peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation. It was known and practiced before the time of Moses. Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedek, "yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all that

he possessed." (Alma 10:8; Gen. 14:20.) When Jesus visited the Nephites, he told them, "Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant. (3 Nephi 11:25.) And he commanded them to write a portion of the book of Malachi, in which is found the command: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house," etc. Speaking relative to the extract from Malachi, Jesus said that the Father had commanded him to give it to the Nephites—that it was wisdom that it "should be given for future generations." (3 Nephi 11:4, 13, 29.) The inconsistency was pointed out of thinking that tithing meant one thing anciently, and another thing today; one thing to Israel, and another thing to us, when the scriptures teach that God is unchangeable, that he speaks "the same words unto one nation like unto another." "And where the two nations shall run together, the testimony of the two nations shall run together also." (See 2 Nephi 12:60, 61.) To further show that tithing is in force today the speaker quoted Book of Commandment 65:30-33: "Behold now it is called today, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned; for after tomorrow cometh the burning."

When we speak of the temporal law given to govern the church we do not mean tithing, or consecration, or stewardship, etc. No one feature comprises the law, hence it is not correct to say the law of tithing, or the law of consecration, etc. The law embodies consecrations, stewardships, granting of inheritances, tithing, and surplus property. The speaker proceeded to define the various terms of the law besides tithing. Consecration means to dedicate, to set apart for a certain purpose, to declare sacred, "If thou loveth me, thou shall serve me and keep all my commandments; and behold, thou shalt consecrate all thy properties, that which thou hast unto me, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken; and they shall be laid before the bishop of my church, and two of the elders, such as he shall appoint and set apart for that purpose."

Stewardship, or the office of a steward, means one employed to manage the concerns of another. The Lord says: "And it shall come to pass, that the bishop of my church, after that he has received the properties of my church, that it cannot be taken from the church, he shall appoint every man a steward over his own property, or that which he has received, inasmuch as is sufficient for himself and family." (Book of Commandments 44:27.) Stewardship does not mean ownership. God is the Creator of all, hence the owner. He permits his children the use of that which he has made, and they hold in trust the portion granted them, as they do their life, their time, their talents, all of which they should use for the glory of God. We are only stewards under

God, and when the light of the gospel comes to us, we should acknowledge our relationship to our Heavenly Father in the manner he sets forth in his law, that the family of God may be set in order by the needs of each being adequately provided for. Thus we co-operate with our Heavenly parent in bringing about this happy state, and we thereby manifest that we have the love of Christ in us by our interest in our brethren. Now we have rendered ourselves worthy for the next step in the law, to receive our inheritance, not after the manner of the world, but under the law of God.

Inheritance differs from stewardship in that it conveys ownership. It is that which is given to us, deeded to us. The applicant is not eligible for inheritance until he has complied with the foregoing requirements of the law, which "rendereth every man acceptable, and answereth all things, for an inheritance." (See Doc. & Cov. 72:4, 51:1.) This is confirmed by Joseph Smith's letter to W. W. Phelps, *Mil. Star*, Vol. 14, page 284.

The storehouse is provided for the residue, or surplus, which becomes the common property of the inhabitants of Zion, "inasmuch as they become heirs according to the laws of the kingdom." (Doc. & Cov. 70:2, and Book of Commandments 44:28, 29.)

Elder A. O. Frisbey occupied the morning hour, July 22nd. It was a spiritual effort. He made an earnest appeal for unity. He did not ask that any subordinate add their ideas to the ideas of others, but pleaded for a unity on the basis of that which is written. He believed if we would apply ourselves diligently to a study of the word of God with open minds and humility of heart that the spirit of truth would lead us to a unity of understanding on important phases of the Lord's work. The brother suggested the possibility of persons being deceived and deceiving themselves, thinking they wanted the truth when they were wedded to their own ideas and determined to have their own way. He said that we must banish all evil surmising from our minds about persons who differed from us; we must be willing to listen to one another and reason together; we must have love for one another and pray for one another. The brother appreciated the need of trying to do something towards bringing about the Zionite ideals of the gospel along temporal lines, and believed the course he outlined would bring to us light that would make the way clearer as we proceeded. The speaker said that when we are living the Christ life, spiritually and temporally, the world will camp around to observe and take notes.

A prominent note in much of our preaching is the temporal aspect of the latter day work. This signifies no lack of appreciation of the spiritual. Rather, it is evidence of an enlarging conception of the requirements of the true

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Christ life. When religion reaches to the pocketbook, and men desire to give their dollars for the upbuilding of Zion, it is about the best proof of the type of spirituality that will bear analysis. There is a type of spirituality—at least it is called that—which likes to go to church and prayer meetings, enjoy the gifts, and wait for God to command at every turn. This type of spirituality poses as very superior to the practical kind which teaches that you must show your faith by your works; that you must prove your love of God by your willingness to help bring about a system by which God's poor and unfortunate children may have opportunities equal to your own. The practical type of spirituality says, "Come, let us take the light we have and start doing something now." The type that assumes to be superior shakes its head and warns that it is dangerous to make any attempt until God commands, or until there is a great outpouring of the Spirit to make the undertaking easy; or, better still, they say, and about the way they think it will be, is that nothing can or will be done until Christ comes to superintend the work. The practical type is met with every discouraging argument by the type that has produced no results in nearly a hundred years. Instead of waiting for God, as their theory is, it appears that God is waiting for them. Maybe, after all, there is a possibility that the practical type may win out. We believe they will if they keep a balanced, symmetrical image of the law before them all the time; and if, with their zeal they do not forget sound, homely business principles, to make all things sure and safe. Also, let them have due regard for the legitimate instincts of human nature, and remember that certain rights and privileges are sacred.

We have been reading into the history of the past a little. History teaches lessons. We read that one time, in the early years of the church, too, a missionary trip was undertaken, when leaders of the of the church, as well as many of the elders, were going. The leaders traveled by stage; the elders, any way they could get along; part of the way that was afoot, begging as they went. When approached about the matter one of the leaders, it is alleged, justified themselves. "You," he said,

"can beg your passage on foot, but we are to travel by stage; we must have money."

The narrator became so sickened that he afterwards left the church, and in writing to a friend he indignantly commented: "Let these men never again open their mouths to insult the common sense of mankind, by contending for equality—until there is a thorough alteration in their method of proceeding."

People have a right to expect that their leaders will practice what they preach. More than that, they have a right to demand it. The priesthood should set an example. We find the Lord calling on the elders, first, to comply with the law. They are to "render an account of their stewardship unto the bishop," and receive a certificate from the bishop showing that they have honored the law which requires "every man that cometh up to Zion must lay all things before the bishop in Zion." (See Doc. & Cov. 72:1, 3, 4.)

Nothing so discourages the members as to see the priesthood out of order. If there is inequality there, big I and little U; if the leading men are not honoring the law themselves as well as teaching it, the membership gets disgusted and grows slack. Of course, this is not as it should be. The membership should not tolerate unfaithfulness or unworthiness in those who preside over them. It is a mistake to think that because men may be called of God they may remain in office until God removes them. God holds the people responsible for his work, and they are derelict in duty if they permit any, regardless of position, to continue to occupy who will not square themselves with the requirements of the law and the office they occupy. Alma commanded the people of the church to "trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments." (Mosiah 11:15.)

There was "a strict command throughout all the churches, that there should be no persecutions among them, that there should be an equality among all men; that they should let no pride nor haughtiness disturb their peace; that every man should esteem his neighbor as himself, laboring with their own hands for their support. Yea, and all their priests and teachers should labor with their own hands for their support, in all cases save it were in sickness, etc." (Bos. 11:153-155.)

What was the result of this policy in the Nephite church? The answer is given: "And doing these things they did abound in the grace of God." "And the Lord did visit them, and prosper them, and they became a large and a wealthy people." (Mosiah 11:155, 158.)

When we read these things we see there is no mystery about why the church of these last days did not establish Zion in the thirties, nor is it strange that the church today has not done the work.