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Testimony to the Inspiration and Divine Calling of Joseph Smith Derived from the Comprehensiveness of the Work He Introduced

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CHAPTER XXVI.

TESTIMONY TO THE INSPIRATION AND DIVINE CALLING OF JOSEPH SMITH DERIVED FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE- NESS OF THE WORK HE INTRODUCED.

Next to the evidence of divine inspiration to be seen in the organization of the Church and the spirit of its government, are those which may be seen in what I shall call the comprehensiveness of the great work founded by Joseph Smith. I mean by this that the New Dispensation contemplates the fulfillment of all things predicted by the prophets; the gathering of Israel, the redemption of Jerusalem, the founding of a city called Zion or New Jerusalem, the ushering in of a reign of peace and righteousness on earth, with Christ as king; the completion of the work of God relative to the salvation of the human race and such a final redemption of the earth as shall convert it into a celestial sphere, the happy abode of such of its inhabitants as have obeyed and are sanctified by celestial laws.

These items have already been alluded to in a former chapter;^a but it is now my purpose to consider some of them more in detail, and to that consideration this chapter and the one following are devoted.

That Israel—by which I mean all the twelve tribes which sprang from the twelve sons of Jacob, together with their descendants scattered among all the nations of the Gentiles—that Israel will be gathered together and be re-established upon the lands covenanted by the Lord to their fore-

^a See chapter xvii.

fathers is abundantly evident from the prophecies of the scripture.

“Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations,” exclaims Jeremiah, “and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all.”^b

Again the prophet says:

“Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.”^c

Isaiah, speaking of that day when the enmity of man and beast shall have departed; when they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God’s holy mountain; when there shall be a reign of righteousness in which the poor and meek of the earth shall be accorded equity—

“It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathos and from Cush, and from Elam and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not

^b Jeremiah xxxi: 10-12. See also verses 7, 8, 9.

^c Jeremiah xvi: 14, 15.

envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. * * * And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."^d

This is one of the prophecies that the angel Moroni repeated to Joseph Smith on the occasion of his first visit, and assured him that it was about to be fulfilled.^e

Again Jeremiah:

"Turn, O back-sliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to my own heart, and they shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass when ye be multiplied and increased in the land in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more the ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind. * * * At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem. * * * In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north, to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.^f

It is needless to multiply passages; if any credit is to be ascribed to prophecy at all it is clear that Israel, the chosen people of God, though now smitten and scattered, are to be gathered together again and re-established in the land given to their fathers. The lost tribes are to be brought from the land of the north, Judah is to return to Jerusalem, and the envy of Ephraim and Judah is to depart, and the mighty power of God which was manifested in the deliverance of

^d Isaiah xi.

^e Pearl of Great Price, p. 50.

^f Jeremiah iii: 15-19.

Israel from Egyptian bondage is to be so far surpassed by a display of his power in the latter-day deliverance, that the former shall not be called to mind.

Not only are the tribes of Israel to be re-assembled upon the lands of their inheritances, but the descendants of the children of Israel scattered through all the nations among which they have been "sifted," are also to be gathered. The Jews since the destruction of their city and nation by the Romans have been scattered among all nations, but they have succeeded in a remarkable manner in preserving their identity as a distinct people. Still it is not to be doubted that there are instances where Jews have married and inter-married with the Gentiles among whom they lived, until they lost their identity, and thus the blood of Israel, unrecognized, is in the veins of many supposed Gentiles. The tribes of Israel sent into Babylon, Assyria and the surrounding countries at the fall of the kingdom of Israel, in the sixth century B. C., in like manner intermingled their blood with the people of those nations. Moreover there are good reasons to believe that in that exodus of the ten tribes from Assyria to the north—(Spoken of, it is true, only by the apocryphal writer Esdras; but as what he says agrees so well with the idea that Israel is to return from the "north," according to the prophets, I am inclined to accept it as true^g)—many became discouraged and stopped by the way. Others unable to prosecute the journey abandoned the expedition, and those that halted, uniting and intermarrying with the original inhabitants of the land, doubtless constituted those prolific races that over-ran the western division of the Roman empire. In this manner the blood of Israel, has been sprinkled among all the nations of the earth, until the word of the Lord which

^g II Esdras xiii.

says: "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations,"^h has been literally fulfilled.

These scattered remnants, I say, are to be gathered, hence the prophet Jeremiah says, "I will take you one of a city and two of a family and bring you to Zion;"ⁱ and Isaiah says, "It shall come to pass that in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, * * * and all nations shall flow unto it."^j John the apostle in those visions received on Patmos foretells a time when a voice shall be heard speaking from heaven, calling upon God's people to come out of Babylon, "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."^k This not only predicts the gathering together of God's people but makes clear one of the reasons for which they are brought from among the nations. It is that they may escape the judgments of God that have been decreed to fall upon the wicked.

The New Dispensation introduced by Joseph Smith includes the fulfillment of these prophecies concerning the return of Israel to their lands. As already stated,^l Moses, the great prophet of ancient Israel, appeared in the Kirtland Temple and there committed to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery "the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north." Indeed the revelations received by Joseph Smith are replete with references to this subject. In one of considerable note occurs the following passage:

"The Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the

^h Amos ix: 8, 9.

ⁱ Jeremiah iii: 14, 15.

^j Isaiah i.

^k Rev. xvii: 4, 5.

^l Chapter xii.

north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord, and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves, and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great dæp. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, and in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there they shall fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim; and they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows. And they also of the tribes of Judah, after their pain, shall be sanctified in holiness before the Lord to dwell in his presence day and night, for ever and for ever."^m

Since this matter of the gathering of Israel and their restoration to the lands of their forefathers is so prominent a subject in the prophecies of Jewish scriptures, it would have proven fatal to all claims of a divine commission by Joseph Smith had he failed to have included this important item of prophecy among the things to be accomplished in the New Dispensation. And since to have missed it would have proven him an imposter, the fact that it is incorporated as an important part of the great work of the last days, is, at least, a presumptive evidence in favor of the genuineness of the prophet's claims. It is all the stronger from the fact that this gathering of Israel and their restoration to their lands and the favor of God seems to have been lost sight of by the world. The announcement of it partakes almost of the nature of a discovery in prophecy: and it shows how universal is the sympathy of the New Dispensation, when it is seen

^mDoc. and Cov. Sec. cxxxiii.

that it carries to the smitten remnants of Israel a message so burdened with hope.

It is also necessary to the completeness of the New Dispensation that it shall include in its list of events the personal and glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the worthy saints and a reign of righteousness for a thousand years. These matters are no less the subject of prophecy than the gathering of Israel: and to omit them from the New Dispensation would be as fatal to Joseph Smith's claim of possessing divine authority as to omit the gathering of Israel. I propose to quote a few of the prophecies relating to the personal coming of Messiah, that the reader may be reminded how direct and emphatic they were.

In the first chapter of the acts of the Apostles an account is given of the departure of Jesus from his disciples into heaven:

"And while they beheld he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."ⁿ

It is generally conceded that the two men in white apparel were angels of God. This prophecy is also in strict harmony with what Jesus himself said: "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."^o

Paul is very explicit on the subject. Writing to the Thessalonian Saints, he says:

ⁿ Acts i: 9-11.

^o Matt. xvi: 27.

"I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep [the dead], that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."^p

Writing a second time to the same people, evidently to encourage them in the midst of their tribulation, he said:

"And to you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus 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; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was not believed) in that day."^q

Closely allied with these prophecies is the prediction of the writer of the Apocalypse which tells of the binding of Satan for a thousand years and the resurrection of "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God. * * * * And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years * * * This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."^r

^p I Thess. iv: 13-17.

^q II Thess. I: 7-10.

^r Rev. xx: 1-7.

The orthodox sects of Christendom have either so spiritualized these prophecies as to explain away their plain meaning, or have put off to so distant a day the Lord's glorious coming that real and active faith in that great event can scarcely be said to exist.

There is another matter connected with the second appearing of Jesus Christ that should be considered. It will be observed that his coming is attended with judgment upon the ungodly and rewards for the righteous. It would accord with our conceptions of justice, necessarily imperfect as they may be, and certainly it would accord with our ideas of the mercy of God if mankind were warned by special messengers of these threatened judgments. Such a proceeding would be in harmony not only with our conceptions of justice but also with the course the Lord has pursued in former ages. For example, when God decreed that he would destroy the antediluvians by a flood, he first sent Noah, a preacher of righteousness among them to warn them of the approaching calamity. When destruction was hanging over the cities of the plain—Sodom and Gormorrah—the Lord sent his angels to first gather out righteous Lot and his family. When destruction was decreed against Nineveh, the prophet Jonah was sent to cry repentance to the people, and in this instance the warning was heeded and the calamity was turned aside. Whenever bondage, famine, disease or judgment of any character, was about to overtake ancient Israel for their wickedness prophets were sent to warn them, that they might repent and escape the sore affliction; and now that mighty judgments are pronounced against the ungodly at the coming of the Son of God, we may reasonably expect that God will be true to his custom in the past, and send messengers to warn the nations of the near approach of those calamities. Indeed the Scriptures plainly say as much.

Jesus replying to the question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" among other things said: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness and then shall the end come."^s I have already discussed at length the declaration of John that an angel would be sent in the hour of God's judgment with the everlasting gospel to be preached to all nations.

"Behold I will send my messenger," says the Lord through Malachi, "and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire and as fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years."^t

I have quoted this last passage at length for the reason that those who advocate that no more revelation is to be given, and that class, as we have seen, includes all Christendom, represent that the messenger here referred to is no other than John the Baptist, and that this prophecy was fulfilled when that personage went throughout Judea crying repentance, proclaiming the coming of the Messiah, and the near approach of the kingdom of heaven. It is with no desire to lessen the importance of John's mission on that occasion that I respectfully dissent from the conclusions of the learned

^s Matt. xxiv: 14.

^t Mal. iii: 1-4.

Christian scholars on that subject. And by way of justification for that dissent I submit the following reflections.

I. Following the work of this messenger of which the prophet Malachi speaks, the Lord is to come suddenly to his temple. Did that come to pass when John the Baptist some nineteen centuries ago prepared the way for the coming of the Son of God, by crying repentance? I think it questionable if the Lord so much as recognized the temple at Jerusalem in those days, corrupted as it was by a fallen priesthood, as his house. When connected with the reflections to follow, I am sure the reader will conclude that this prophecy must relate to some other temple than that old and corrupted one at Jerusalem, and to some other appearing than any which occurred at that temple during the former career of Jesus on earth.

II. "But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth?" From this it seems that it will be difficult to abide the day of his coming, and to stand when he appeareth in fulfillment of this prophecy of Malachi's. Was it so when Jesus came in the meridian of time to make his great atonement for man? Let the life of Jesus answer. Passing by the days of his childhood and youth, we may see him emerge from the obscurity of his uneventful life at Nazareth in the full bloom of perfected manhood. He applies to John for baptism, that he might fulfill all righteousness; and as from the watery grave he is brought forth, lo! a voice from heaven proclaims him the Son of God. From that time he becomes a teacher of men. On the peaceful hills, and in the quiet hamlets of Galilee, or along the pleasant shores of the lake of that name, men heard his gracious words, and admired while they marveled at the wisdom of one untaught in schools and unlearned in man's petty wisdom. The synagogues of the Jews also resounded

with his doctrines, and the tones of his voice so mild among the pastoral people of Galilee, swelled into mighty notes of denunciation, when he approached the centers of population where wickedness more abounded. His arraignment of the priests, his denunciation of the national hypocrisy, his condemnation of the false traditions which were making of no effect the law of God—all this delivered in the tone of undoubted authority, brought upon him the wrath of a corrupt priesthood, which conspired to kill him.

The priests were successful. They were careful to arouse the people against him; and sometimes the Son of God sought safety from their violence by flight. At the last he was betrayed into their hands; dragged unceremoniously before the high priest at midnight; thence to the Sanhedrim, where he was tried and condemned, and afterwards mocked, beaten and spit upon; next morning he is brought before Pilate for the confirmation of the sentence of death; and though the Roman judge could see nothing in his conduct which would warrant the sentence, the cries of the rabble prevailed over his better judgment, and Jesus was condemned to crucifixion. Through the streets of Jerusalem bending beneath the weight of his own cross, and scourged with cords by the soldiery, to the infinite delight of the rabble which shouted at his heels, Jesus moved towards the place of his execution. Arriving there he is stripped of his clothing, his limbs are stretched to the cross, and through the quivering flesh the nails are driven. The cross is erected, and on either side, is placed a criminal condemned to execution. Before him now pass the mocking rabble with which the chief priests mingle. Tauntingly they pass by and do him mock reverence, saying, "Hail King of the Jews—hail!" "He saved others," they shout, "let him save himself. Let him come down from the cross and we will believe on him."

“He trusted in God—let him deliver him now, if he will have him—” and amid such taunts as these the Son of God expired.

Tell me, was it difficult to abide that day of his coming? Or difficult to stand in that day of his appearing? Clearly it was not. But when the Son of God shall come in the glory of his Father, to reward every man according to his works; when he shall come with “ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him;”^u when he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, then there will be pertinence in the questions, “Who may abide the day of his coming?” “Who shall stand when he appeareth?”

III. The argument may be pushed further still. When the Lord comes suddenly to his temple, in fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy, he is to “sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” Did Jesus do so when he was on earth nineteen centuries ago? No; the sons of Levi were not purified, neither then nor at any time since have they offered an acceptable offering unto the Lord.

IV. “Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.” Did such a result as this follow the appearance and mission of Jesus in Palestine, when he came to be offered as a sacrifice for sinful man? On the contrary, Judah was rejected; his temple was destroyed, so that not one stone was left upon another that was not cast down; Jerusa-

^u Jude 14-15.

lem was made desolate, and for many centuries has been trodden under foot of the Gentiles, while her children, as outcasts, have wandered among the nations, a hiss, a byword, and a reproach.

In the light of all these circumstances, it is perfectly clear (1) that the terms of Malachi's prophecy concerning the Lord coming suddenly to his temple, were not fulfilled in his first appearing, and hence the prophecy must refer to some subsequent appearing, which is to be followed with a blessing upon the house of Israel, the purifying of the sons of Levi, and the re-establishment of Jerusalem; (2) that preceding that glorious coming a messenger will be sent to prepare the way.

The prophecy of Malachi, without doubt, refers to some glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus, such as that prophesied by the New Testament writers, when they predict that he shall come in the glory of his Father to judgment, before which event, however, a great preparatory work is to be performed: the gospel restored to earth and preached to all nations as a witness, Israel gathered, the Jews restored to Palestine, a temple builded to which the Lord may come, and a people prepared to receive him. This preparatory work the reader will recognize in the work founded by Joseph Smith. And if John the Baptist was a special messenger to prepare the way for the coming of Christ, and he is to prepare the way for his second coming as well as for his first, the reader will remember that it was this personage who appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood. That Priesthood, according to the teachings of Joseph Smith, holds "the keys of the ministering of angels, *and the preparatory gospel.*" Moreover, when John the Baptist conferred that Priesthood upon the two men named, he told them that it

would "never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness,"^v a promise so similar to that made in the prophecy of Malachi that it surely argues some connection between this angel's message and the fulfillment of that prediction.

In further evidence that the work founded by Joseph Smith, is one to prepare the way for the glorious appearing of Messiah let the following instructions and admonitions given early in the history of the Church of Christ in the New Dispensation to the elders of the Church be considered:

"Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned, to warn his neighbor. Therefore, they are left without excuse, and their sins are upon their own heads. * * * Therefore, tarry ye, and labor diligently, that you may be perfected in your ministry to go forth among the Gentiles for the last time, as many as the mouth of the Lord shall name, to bind up the law and seal up the testimony and to prepare the saints for the hour of judgment which is to come; that their souls may escape the wrath of God, the desolation of abomination which awaits the wicked, both in this world and in the world to come. * * * Abide ye in the liberty wherewith ye are made free; entangle not yourselves in sin, but let your hands be clean, until the Lord come; for not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man, and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light, and the moon shall be bathed in blood, and the stars shall become exceeding angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig tree.

"And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people; for after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground, and shall not be able to stand. And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunders, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea, heaving themselves beyond

^v Doc. and Cov. Sec. xiii.

their bounds. And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people; and angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying, Prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come: behold and lo! the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him."^w

"Hearken, and lo, a voice as of one from on high, * * * Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth; yea, a voice crying—Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the supper of the Lamb, make ready for the Bridegroom; pray unto the Lord, call upon his holy name, make known his wonderful works among the people; call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth."^x

^wDoc. and Cov. lxxxviii: 78, 92.

^xDoc. and Cov. lxxv.