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Letter V

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He then proceeded and gave a general account of the promises made to the fathers, and also gave a history of the aborigines of this country, and said they were literal descendants of Abraham. He represented them as once being an enlightened and intelligent people, possessing a correct knowledge of the gospel, and the plan of restoration and redemption. He said this history was written and deposited not far from that place, and that it was our brother's privilege, if obedient to the commandments of the Lord, to obtain, and translate the same by the means of the Urim and Thummim, which were deposited for that purpose with the record.

"Yet," said he, "the scripture must be fulfilled before it is translated, which says that the words of a book, which were sealed, were presented to the learned; for thus has God determined to leave men without excuse, and show to the meek that his arm is not shortened that it cannot save."

A part of the book was sealed, and was not to be opened yet. The sealed part, said he, contains the same revelation which was given to John upon the isle of Patmos, and when the people of the Lord are prepared, and found worthy, then it will be unfolded unto them.

On the subject of bringing to light the unsealed part of this record, it may be proper to say, that our brother was expressly informed, that it must be done with an eye single to the glory of God; if this consideration did not wholly characterize all his proceedings in relation to it, the adversary of truth would overcome him, or at least prevent his making that proficiency in this glorious work which he otherwise would.

While describing the place where the record was deposited, he gave a minute relation of it, and the vision of his mind being opened at the same time, he was permitted to view it critically; and previously being acquainted with the place, he was able to follow the direction of the vision, afterward, according to the voice of the angel, and obtain the book.

I close for the present by subscribing myself as ever, your brother in Christ.

LETTER V.

DEAR BROTHER,

YOU will notice in my last, on rehearsing the words of the angel, where he communicated to our brother, that his sins were forgiven, and that he was called of the Lord to bring to light, by the gift of inspiration, this important intelligence, an item like the following:—"God has chosen the foolish things of the world, and things which are despised, God has chosen," &c.

This I conceive to be an important item. Not many mighty and noble, were called in ancient times, because they always *knew so much* that God could not teach them, and a man that would listen to the voice of the Lord and follow the teachings of heaven, always was despised, and considered to be of the foolish class—Paul proves this fact, when he says, “We are made as the filth of the world—the off-scouring of all things unto this day.”

I am aware, that a rehearsal of visions, of angels, at this day, is as inconsistent with a portion of mankind as it formerly was, after all the boast of this wise generation in the knowledge of the truth; but there is a uniformity so complete, that on the reflection, one is led to rejoice that it is so.

In my last I gave an imperfect description of the angel, and was obliged to do so, for the reason that my pen would fail to describe an angel in his glory, or the glory of God. I also gave a few sentences which he uttered on the subject of the gathering of Israel, &c. Since writing the former, I have thought it would, perhaps, be interesting to give something more full on this important subject, as well as a revelation of the gospel. That these holy personages should feel a deep interest in the accomplishment of the glorious purposes of the Lord, in his work in the last days, is consistent, when we view critically what is recorded of their sayings in the holy Scriptures.

You will remember to have read in Daniel, “And at that time (the last days,) shall Michael stand up, the great prince, who stands for the children of thy people;” and also in Revelations, “I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets.” Please compare these sayings with that singular expression in Hebrews, “Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” And then let me ask nine questions:—

First; Are the angels now in glory, the former prophets and servants of God?

Secondly; Are they brethren of those who keep his commandments on earth? and

Thirdly; Have brethren and fleshly kindred, in the kingdom of God, feelings of respect and condescension enough to speak to each other, though one may be in heaven and the other on the earth?

Fourthly; If angels are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation, will they not minister for those heirs? and

Fifthly; If they do, will any one know it?

Sixthly; Will Michael, the archangel, the great prince, stand up in the last days for Israel?

Seventhly; Will he defend them from their enemies?

Eighthly; Will he lead them, as they were once led? and

Ninthly, If so, will he be seen?—These questions I leave without answering, because the reasoning is so plain, and so many might be brought, that they must be at hand in the heart and mind of every saint. But to the gospel and then to the gathering.

The great plan of redemption being prepared before the fall of man, and the salvation of the human family being as precious in the sight of the Lord at one time as at another, before the Messiah came in the flesh and was crucified, as after the gospel was preached, and many were found obedient to the same. This gospel being the same from the beginning, its ordinances were also unchangeable. Men were commanded to repent and be baptized by water in the name of the Lord, and were then blessed with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit being thus given, men were enabled to look forward to the time of the coming of the Son of Man, and to rejoice in that day, because through that sacrifice they looked for a remission of their sins and for their redemption.

Had it not been for this plan of salvation, which God devised before the fall, man must have remained miserable for ever, after transgressing the first commandment, because in consequence of that transgression he had rendered himself unworthy the presence of his Maker. He being therefore cast out, the gospel was preached, and this hope of eternal life was set before him by the ministering of angels who delivered it as they were commanded.

Not only did the ancients look forward to the time of the coming of the Messiah in the flesh with delight, but there was another day for which they sought and for which they prayed. Knowing, as they did, that the fall had brought upon them death, and that man was sensual and evil, they longed for a day when the earth might again rest and appear as in the beginning—when evil might be unknown upon its face, and all creation enjoy one undisturbed peace for a thousand years.

This being sought for in faith, it pleased the Lord to covenant with them to roll on his purposes until he should bring it to pass—and though many generations were to be gathered to their fathers, yet the righteous, those who should in their lives embrace the gospel and live obedient to its requirements, rise and inherit it during this reign of peace.

From time to time the faithful servants of the Lord have endeavoured to raise up a people who should be found worthy to inherit this rest (for it was called the rest of the righteous, or, the day of the Lord's rest prepared for the righteous); but were not able to sanctify them that they could endure the presence of the Lord, excepting Enoch, who, with his people, for their righteousness were taken into heaven, with a promise that they should yet see that day when the whole earth should be covered with glory.

Moses laboured dilligently to effect this object, but in consequence of the transgressions and rebellions of the children of Israel, God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; and in consequence of this decree, and their transgressions since, they have been scattered to the four winds, and are thus to remain till the Lord gathers them in by his own power.

To a remnant of them the gospel was preached by the Messiah in person, but they rejected his voice though it was raised daily among them. The apostles continued to hold forth the same after the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, until they would hear it no longer, and then they were commanded to turn to the Gentiles.

They however laboured faithfully to turn that people from error, that they might be the happy partakers of mercy, and save themselves from the impending storm that hung over them. They were commanded to preach Jesus Christ night and day—to preach through him the resurrection from the dead—to declare that all who would embrace the gospel, repent, and be baptized for the remission of their sins, should be saved—to declare that this was the only sure foundation on which they could build and be safe—that God had again visited his people in consequence of his covenant with their fathers, and that if they would they might be the first who should receive these glad tidings, and have the unspeakable joy of carrying the same to all people; for before the day of rest comes, it must go to all nations, kindreds, and tongues.

But in consequence of their rejecting the gospel, the Lord suffered them to be again scattered, their land to be wasted, and their beautiful city to be trodden down of the Gentiles, until their time should be fulfilled.

In the last days, to fulfil the promises to the ancient prophets, when the Lord is to pour out his spirit upon all flesh, he has determined to bring to light his gospel to the Gentiles, that it may go to the house of Israel. This gospel has been perverted and men have wandered in darkness. That commission given to the apostles at Jerusalem, so easy to be understood, has been hid from the world, because of evil, and the honest have been led by the designing, till there are none to be found who are practising the ordinances of the gospel, as they were anciently delivered.

But the time has now arrived, in which, according to his covenants, the Lord will manifest to the faithful that he is the same to-day and forever, and that the cup of suffering of his people, the house of Israel, is nearly filled; and that the way may be prepared before their face, he will bring to the knowledge of the people the gospel as it was preached by his servants on this land, and manifest to the obedient the truth of the same,

by the power of the Holy Spirit; for the time is near when his sons and daughters will prophesy, old men dream dreams, and young men see visions, and those who are thus favoured will be such as embrace the gospel as it was delivered in old times, and they shall be blessed with signs following.

Farther on the subject of the gathering of Israel:—

This was perfectly understood by all ancient prophets. Moses prophesied of the affliction which should come upon that people even after the coming of the Messiah, where he said, and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the works of your hands. Connecting this with a prophecy in the song which follows, which was given to Moses in the tabernacle—remembering the expression, “in the latter days,” where the Lord foretells all their evil, and their being received to mercy, to such as seek the peace of Israel much instruction may be gained. It is as follows:—

“I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend my arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat. I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling with the man of gray hairs.”

But after all this he will judge their enemies and avenge them of theirs; for he says:—

“If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh.”

After all this—after Israel has been restored and afflicted, and his enemies have also been chastised, the Lord says, “rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land and to his people.”

I will give a further detail of the promises to Israel hereafter, as rehearsed by the angel.

Accept assurance of my esteem as ever.

LETTER VI.

DEAR BROTHER,

I gave in my last a few words on the subject of a few items, as spoken by the angel at the time the knowledge of the record of the Nephites was communicated to our brother, and in consequence of the subject of the gospel and that of the gathering of Israel being so connected, I found it difficult to speak of the