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A Marvelous Work and a Wonder

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Abstract: This article covers how Isaiah 29 prophesies future events concerning the Book of Mormon. The history of the Church proves that the Mormon church is a marvelous work and a wonder. Most of the persecution against the Church stems from the Book of Mormon.

 THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

 MONDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1883.

 A MARVELOUS WORK AND A WONDER.

WHETHER the work which the Latter-day Saints are engaged in is the "marvelous work and a wonder" which the Lord, through His Prophet, Isaiah, said He would do, or not, we think it can be proved that it has thus far answered the prophetic description of it in a remarkable manner. If we turn to the 29th chapter of Isaiah, we find that the coming forth of a certain book is predicted. Those who are familiar with the early history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints require no argument to convince them that this prophecy was literally fulfilled in the Book of Mormon being revealed and published. The condition, too, of the people at the time of that event was almost as accurately foretold in the prophecy as it could be written now after it has been fulfilled. The text says: "For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath He covered." It is a well known fact that for a period of seventeen centuries prophets and seers had been covered; they had ceased to exist among men. The channel of communication between the heavens and the earth had been closed. Such a spirit of deep sleep prevailed, and the eyes of the people were so closed, that they really imagined that prophets and seers, the inspired men, through whom the Lord formerly made known His will, were no longer necessary. They had come to the conclusion that the Lord never again intended to reveal His will to mankind. Book learning, and the theories and speculations of men, had taken the place of that knowledge which formerly came from God through the inspiration of His Holy Spirit. The idea prevailed that men must receive a special education in order to understand or expound the scriptures—that it was a fallacy to imagine that illiterate fishermen could be inspired for such a work in this age. "Having itching ears," the people had "heaped to themselves teachers," as Paul foresaw that they would, and their hearts had been turned away from the truth unto fables. They had departed from the plain and simple teachings of the Savior and His Apostles, and substituted in the place thereof creeds and homilies and litanies devised by man. They had changed the simple form of worship originally introduced in the Church to elaborate man-made rituals, in which a mysterious formality, a scrupulous attention to dress, intonation of voice, music and posture took the place of the inspiration formerly enjoyed by the true worshippers. They had grown to "observe days and months and times and years" with a great deal more care than the ordinances of the Gospel which seekers after salvation were formerly required to conform to, any or all

of which they considered themselves justified in discarding as non-essential. They had ceased to regard God as a Being possessed of all the faculties and powers that man possesses, only infinitely perfected—a Being who could walk and talk with man as He did in Bible days, and conjured up in their own minds in the place thereof a nonentity—a something “without body, parts or passions.” They prayed to and worshiped this myth because they were taught by men to do so, while their hearts were as directly opposed to the idea of the true God as light is to darkness. They had no conception of His existence, attributes or purposes.

Seeing that such would be the condition of the people among whom and at the time when that book which was spoken of should be revealed, the Lord further said through His prophet:

“Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid”—(Isaiah xxix, 13, 14).

Now, in tracing the history of the work in which the Latter-day Saints are engaged from its inception to the present, what do we find? Joseph Smith, an illiterate boy of the backwoods of America, only fifteen years of age, testifies, in the year 1820, that God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ have appeared to him and declared all the churches in existence to be wrong. His acquaintances charge him with lying, and ridicule and abuse him, but he dare not deny the statement. The news spreads like wildfire. The old puritanical hatred for heresy is aroused, and he is threatened and persecuted and reviled until his life is a burden to him, but with the knowledge that he has told the truth he cannot recant. Three years pass and he is visited by another heavenly messenger, named Moroni, who tells him that through him, if he is faithful, the Lord intends to restore the Gospel and establish His Church, and that a certain ancient record, buried in the earth, will be given to him to translate. Four years afterwards he receives this record from the angelic custodian, and by the gift and power of God translates it, and publishes what is known as the Book of Mormon. The bitter persecution which has followed him for nine years grows stronger, and his life is sought, but he is preserved miraculously. John the Baptist visits him and bestows upon him and a companion, Oliver Cowdery, the Aaronic Priesthood. Peter, James and John appear and confer upon them the Melchisedec Priesthood. The Lord reveals His will and requires them to establish a Church. It is organized on the 6th day of April, 1830, with only six members. Others rally around their standard. Persecution grows more rife, and they remove from Ohio to Missouri. They increase in numbers and acquire extensive possessions, but persecution follows, and they are driven from one county to another and finally banished from the State. They locate in Illinois, and Nauvoo, at that time the most beautiful city of the west, is built. The poor continue to join their ranks, the learned and rich to despise them, and the bigoted and envious to wage a war of persecution against them, which culminates, on the 27th of June, 1844, in the two leading men of the Church, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, being cruelly martyred. The enemies of the

Church look for its dissolution, but are disappointed. Its perpetuation is provided for; the Priesthood remains with all its keys and gifts and powers, and, sorrow-stricken but not disheartened, the people cling together and maintain the principles which they all declare God has revealed to them the truth of. Opposition to them increases, mobs organize and prey upon them, and all who will not renounce their religion are again forcibly driven from their homes and possessions. Amidst untold sufferings and hardships they journey 1,500 miles, a great part of the way over a trackless desert, to the heart of the Rocky Mountain region, the bleak, desolate, forbidding valley of the Great Salt Lake. Weary and footsore, they come to a halt, thankful to find a place of rest so far removed from their old enemies, grateful for the isolation that is afforded them in occupying a land that no other people would care to possess. Inspired by zeal and faith in the protecting care of the Almighty, they set earnestly to work to establish colonies, inaugurate a new system of agriculture, and contend with drouth, frosts, crickets, grasshoppers and hostile Indians in raising a scanty subsistence from the stubborn soil. Great deprivations are endured, but faith conquers, the climate moderates, the soil becomes productive and flocks and herds increase. Additions are made to the population by thousands of immigrants from the nations of Europe, as well as from different parts of America, where the work of proselyting has been vigorously carried on amidst all the troubles of the Church. The colonies extend, new valleys are settled and prosperity prevails; but now new troubles arise. The persecution from which the Saints hoped to escape by fleeing to the mountains has followed them. It has assumed a national shape. The army of the Republic is sent to exterminate them. Conscious of their innocence, the people make a gallant defence. They decide to burn their homes rather than have them fall into the hands of the enemy. The army, instead of marching in and occupying the pleasant homes of the Saints as anticipated, is kept out in the mountains with supplies cut off, and almost perishes from cold and hunger. Time is had for reflection. Better counsel prevails, commissioners are sent to investigate the charges against the Saints, and they are found to be false. A treaty is made and the army enters Salt Lake Valley, but is soon recalled on the breaking out of war between the North and South. That which was intended for their injury proves in the end for the benefit of the Saints. They continue to increase and extend their borders. Politicians become alarmed at their growing power, and the trained preachers of every sect, finding themselves unable to cope with the illiterate "Mormons" in reasoning upon religion, or in supporting their doctrines by Bible proofs, become exasperated and resort to vilifying them and demanding their destruction by the strong arm of the law. Congress is agitated and laws are passed for entrapping and suppressing the adherents of the unpopular creed. But though the laws are the result of the concentrated wisdom of the nation, they fail to exactly fit the case. Although a part of the religion of the Saints is declared to be criminal, they are conscientious in practicing it, and refuse to prefer charges against one another, so convictions cannot be obtained. They continue to thrive, and their enemies grow more mad and demand and connive at their destruction regardless of law. Popular prejudice is fanned to a white heat.

Other nations are appealed to for aid in the work of suppressing the dreaded sect "that is everywhere spoken against." Thousands of preachers of every other creed unite in demanding of Congress the enactment of laws more severe than ever, that will crush the despised people and their institutions root and branch. Their destruction seems imminent, as it has a hundred times before. Constitutional restrictions are thrown aside and Congress, goaded to desperation, passes a law as outrageous in its provisions as ever disgraced the statute book of a civilized nation. The people against whom it is framed, as usual, continue to pursue the even tenor of their way, observing all the requirements of their religion, propagating their doctrines in every land, and rapidly adding to their numbers by natural increase and immigration. Commissioners are appointed to execute the new law. Thousands of the proscribed people are deprived of the franchise and the right to hold office, without even the shadow of a trial, and every effort is made to incite the people to rebel, and furnish an excuse for bringing down the vengeance of the nation upon them, driving them from their coveted possessions and despoiling them as in times past; but impossible. The effort proves futile. The people remain true to their convictions, are patient but firm and trust in God, as ever before. The clouds that overshadowed them vanish, the efforts to prove them guilty of any crime fail; the new law is pronounced inoperative and the essence of foolishness, and other plans for the future are urged with all the vehemence of desperation.

Thus stands the case of the Latter-day Saints at the present time. What the future may develop remains to be seen. They have an abiding faith in that Providence which has never forsaken them in the past. They know that it is not through their own wisdom that they have been enabled to escape the destruction which has threatened them a hundred times heretofore, and they do not trust in their own wisdom for the future. The wisdom of the wisest men of which the United States can boast has been arrayed against them, but as was predicted that wisdom has "perished," or been proved to be foolishness. "The understanding of the prudent" has been appealed to many times over for a solution of the vexed problem, but it has been "hid," for all the plans proposed have proved equally abortive in checking the progress of the "marvelous work and a wonder." The enemies of that work have frequently had their hopes raised by the prospect of its certain destruction, only to have them dashed to the ground by seeing their schemes fail. Their repeated disappointments are aptly described in the prophecy:

"It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion" (Isaiah xxix, 8).

Can it be denied that it is "a wonderful work and a wonder" that has survived all the opposition which this Church has had to meet? Can it be doubted that it is "a wonderful work and a wonder" which is acknowledged to be the most complete organization, civil or religious, in existence? Hear what one of the Utah Commissioners says:

"The thorough organization of Mormonism is the first difficulty met in prosecuting our work in Utah. We know of no system whose organization is more complete than

that of the Mormon Church, and such is their system of operating this vast machine that Mormonism is almost impregnable."

Is not the work of the Latter-day Saints all the more "a marvelous work and a wonder," when we consider that it has had only the poor and unlearned of this world for its adherents, and then think of what it has accomplished? Is it not marvelous that so many people should be gathered together from so many different nations, all having one common purpose in view, dwelling together in harmony, and setting an example to the world in temporal and spiritual unity, in love for one another, in good works and firmness and independence such as can be found among no other people living? Is it not wonderful that this work possesses the power to so transform people? If not, why do not other systems possess the same power?

The truth is that the Lord is with the Latter-day Saints. He is shaping their destiny. He is holding in check those who are opposed to them, and He will continue to do. He will overthrow the schemes of the wicked, and "the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

RELEASES.--Solomon King, of the London Conference, and John Crawford, of the Glasgow Conference, are released to return home with the company which will sail on the 27th inst.

DISTRICT MEETING.--General meetings of the Glasgow District will be held in the Upper Hall, 8 Watson Street, off the Gallowgate, Glasgow, on Sunday, Oct. 21st, at 11 a.m., and 2 and 6 p.m. The Saints will please take notice and govern themselves accordingly. Elder Geo. C. Lambert, of the Liverpool Office, will be present.

ABSTRACT OF CORRESPONDENCE.

A COMMENDABLE FEELING IN AN ELDER.

We have noticed, with regret, for some months past, that President James D. Hirst, of the Nottingham Conference, has been failing in health, but have been in hopes he would take a change for the better, so that he could remain at least another year in the Mission where his labors are so much appreciated. It having come to our knowledge of late, however, that he was gradually growing worse, we announced his release without consulting him. We really felt loth to spare him from the Mission, but could not feel justified in keeping him longer under the circumstances. We have now received a letter from him dated Nottingham, Sept. 27th, in which his own feelings are expressed as follows:

"I was very much surprised to see in the last STAR that I was released from my labors in this land to return home with the company sailing October 27th. I am sure I have not complained to anyone. I would rather drop in my tracks than shrink from my duties in this Church. I am sorry to say that my health is not so good as I would wish, but I think I could pull through another year, and then I should feel so much better in going home. I do not wish to dictate you, however; I am in your hands, and will do as you think will be for the best."