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My dear brethren and sisters, it is in deep humility that I stand here this morning before you. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith has just told of the coming of the Mormon Pioneers to Utah, in a very beautiful way. I would like also to say something on that subject this morning. Throughout 1947 a million people are observing the centennial of the arrival of the Mormon Pioneers in the Salt Lake valley. Our hearts are turned with love and adoration to this noble race of men and women who just one hundred years ago were driven from their homes in the East and suffered untold hardships while crossing the plains. Many of them sacrificed their lives while others came to Utah, and here they built a great commonwealth in the arid region of the Rocky Mountains.

A TRIBUTE TO THE PIONEERS

These people endured extreme hardships and made great sacrifices because they knew that the Eternal Father and his Only Begotten Son had come down from heaven in answer to the Prophet Joseph Smith's prayer in the Sacred Grove. They also knew that angels had brought to Joseph Smith the Holy Priesthood. The Holy Ghost had borne testimony to their hearts that God had established upon the earth again the true gospel of Jesus Christ which they had embraced. Thus these Mormon pioneers were a devout, God-fearing people who firmly believed that they had been called of the Lord to build up Zion and to prepare the world for the millennial reign of the Son of Man. In fact, they endured because they firmly believed that such scriptures as the following applied to them:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9.)

It is not the material things of life which make a people great but the high spiritual qualities of the soul engendered in men and women through faith in God, through a conviction of immortality, and through a recognition that there exists a moral order of laws which must be obeyed, which lifts a race of mortals to a position "a little lower than the angels." (Psalm 8:5.) In fact, these intangible spiritual qualities exalt man to his full stature as a son of God.

The Mormon pioneers were great men and women, and we honor them today because they possessed these spiritual qualities and extended their vision into the eternities.

**THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY IN THE SETTLEMENT
OF THE SAINTS IN THE WEST**

The question has oftentimes been discussed as to why and when the Mormon pioneers decided to select the Great Basin as their home.

Bishop LeGrand Richards very beautifully pointed out yesterday that the ancient prophets looked down through the stream of time and saw that in the last days the Saints would establish themselves in the tops of the mountains. I would like to add to that thought today a definite statement that history affirms that this people settled Utah because God selected this spot for them and revealed to the modern prophets that here was the place in which to establish his people and to build Zion. In fact, as early as August 6, 1842, the Lord made known to the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Saints would be driven from their homes in Nauvoo and would migrate to the Rocky Mountains. On that date the Prophet wrote in his journal:

I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of you will live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains. (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol 5, p. 85.)

A year and a half later and only four months before the death of Joseph Smith, he was making definite arrangements to explore the West preparatory to the anticipated migration. On February 20, 1844, he wrote in his journal:

I instructed the Twelve Apostles to send out a delegation and investigate the location of California and Oregon, and hunt out a good location, where we can remove to after the temple is completed, and where we can build a city in a day, and have a government of our own, get up into the mountains, where the devil cannot dig us out, and live in a healthful climate, where we can live as old as we have a mind to. (*ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 222.)

We should keep in mind that California included Utah at that time, and Oregon included Idaho; therefore, when Joseph Smith mentioned Oregon and California, he referred to the region that we are living in today.

In accordance with instructions given by Joseph to send out a company to explore the West and select a site for a city of the Saints, four men immediately volunteered to go, and four others were assigned to accompany them.

Two days later the Prophet told the Twelve Apostles that he wanted an exploration of the entire intermountain country. He said:

Send twenty-five men. . . . Appoint a leader, and let them beat up for volunteers. I want every man that goes to be a king and a priest. When he gets on the mountains he may want to talk with his God. (*ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 224.)

The following Sunday (February 25, 1844) Joseph Smith spoke to the Saints and then recorded in his journal his principal thought as follows:

I gave some important instructions, and prophesied that within five years we should be out of the power of our old enemies, whether they were apostates or of the world; and told the brethren to record it, that when it comes to pass they need not say they had forgotten the saying. (*ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 225.)

The proposed exploring expedition to the Rocky Mountains, however, was never made. Right at this time the persecution of the Saints increased greatly and was climaxed with the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum. However, only five days before their deaths, Joseph and others made temporary arrangements to flee to the Rocky Mountains for safety and have the Saints join them there later. Governor Ford had demanded that Joseph, Hyrum, and other Mormon leaders appear at Carthage for trial. When the governor's letter was read to Joseph Smith, he said to those with him:

The way is open. It is clear to my mind what to do. All they want is Hyrum and myself; then tell everybody to go about their business, and not collect in groups, but to scatter about. There is no doubt they will come here and search for us. Let them search; they will not harm you in person or property, and not even a hair of your head. We will cross the river tonight, and go away to the West. (*ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 545, 546.)

Later that same day Hyrum confirmed Joseph's decision to flee to the Rocky Mountains. In a statement made to Reynolds Cahoon, he said:

A company of men are seeking to kill my brother Joseph, and the Lord has warned him to flee to the Rocky Mountains to save his life. (Hyrum Smith cited in *ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 547.)

Joseph and Hyrum crossed the Mississippi River preparatory to going to the Rocky Mountains; but as the result of complaints made by some of the Saints, they returned to Nauvoo, and shortly thereafter they were killed.

OPINIONS OF EARLY EXPLORERS

Following their deaths, the enemies of Mormonism actively worked to destroy the Church. In the fall of 1845, vicious men mobbed the Saints in the outlying settlements. Since it was generally known at the time of Joseph Smith's death that he contemplated a move to the West, the people of Illinois demanded that the Saints leave the state and migrate into the wilderness. Brigham Young, who had now assumed leadership, and his associates accepted their demand and announced that the Saints would migrate the following spring.

The maps and the account of John C. Fremont's exploration of the Far West had recently been published. Throughout the winter of 1845 and 1846, while the Saints were preparing to abandon their homes and move, Brigham Young and the other Mormon leaders carefully studied Fremont's exploration of the Rocky Mountain region.

In the fall of 1846, fifteen thousand exiled Saints had made temporary homes on the banks of the Missouri River where the cities of Omaha and Council Bluffs now stand. While there they gleaned all the information they could regarding the Great West. Father Pierre Jean DeSmet, a Jesuit priest who had spent many years as a missionary among the Indians in this region, visited the Mormon refugees. He reported a conversation he had had with the Saints as follows:

They asked me a thousand questions about the regions I had explored and the valley [meaning the Salt Lake valley] which I have just described to you, pleased them greatly from the account I gave them of it. (Cited in Levi Edgar Young, *The Founding of Utah*, p. 86.)

When the pioneers were crossing the plains the following summer, on June 26, 1847, near South Pass, they met Major Moses Harris. He was a man who had spent twenty years in the Rocky Mountains. Orson Pratt recorded in his journal the conversation they had with Major Harris. He wrote:

We obtained much information from him in relation to the great interior basin of the Salt Lake, the country of our destination. His report like that of Captain Fremont's is rather unfavorable to the formation of a colony in this basin, principally on account of the scarcity of timber. (Orson Pratt, *Journal*, June 26, 1847, cited in Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record*, vol. 9, p. 58.)

Two days later, the Pioneers met James Bridger who was on his way to Fort Laramie. Pratt stated that Mr. Bridger,

... being a man of extensive acquaintance with this interior country, we made many inquiries of him in relation to the "great basin" and the country south. His information was rather more favorable than that of Major Harris. (Orson Pratt, *Journal*, June 28, 1847, cited in *Millennial Star*, May 15, 1850.)

And William Clayton added the thought that Bridger

... thinks the region around Utah lake is the best country in the vicinity of the Salt Lake. (William Clayton, *Journal*, June 28, 1847, cited in Andrew Jenson, *op. cit.*, p. 60.)

We should be aware of the fact that each of these experiences bears indisputable evidence that the "Mormon" leaders knew where they were going long before they arrived in the Salt Lake valley, because they were being led there by divine revelation from the Lord.

BRIGHAM YOUNG'S INSPIRATION

On June 30, the Pioneer band had arrived on the banks of the Green River in Wyoming. There they were met by Samuel Brannan. He had come from San Francisco to persuade the Mormons to settle in California. Although he gave Brigham Young a glowing

report of the wonderful country around San Francisco Bay and an equally discouraging report regarding the barren desert wastes of the Rocky Mountain region, President Young refused to take the Saints to California. The Mormon leader was following the inspiration of the Lord, and he could not be induced to exchange it for the wisdom of man. God had pointed out to him, as well as to the Prophet Joseph Smith, that the place to settle the Saints was in the "midst of the Rocky Mountains."

The fact that on July 12, Brigham Young commissioned Orson Pratt to lead a vanguard company ahead of the main body of Pioneers for the purpose of making a road into the Salt Lake valley gives additional evidence that the Mormon leaders knew where they were going. Nine days later Erastus Snow overtook Elder Pratt, saying Brigham Young wanted Elder Pratt to bear slightly northward after leaving the canyon and select a spot for plowing, planting seed, and building a city. On July 21, Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow emerged from the mouth of Emigration Canyon. Then they climbed to the top of a hill and viewed the Great Salt Lake valley lying before them. Regarding this experience, Elder Snow recorded the following in his journal:

From the view we had of the valley from the top of the mountain, we supposed it to be only an arm of prairie extending up from the Utah valley, but on ascending this butte we involuntarily, both at the same instant, uttered a shout of joy at finding it to be the very place of our destination, and beheld the broad bosom of the Salt Lake spreading itself before us.¹ (Erastus Snow, *Journal* July 21, 1847, cited in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church*, vol. 3, p. 216.)

Pratt's vanguard company camped on a stream subsequently known as City Creek on July 23. There he called his associates together and dedicated the land as the new home of the Saints.

Erastus Snow testified that God directed Brigham Young to the Salt Lake Valley. To quote:

President Young said . . . that this was the place he had seen long since in vision; it was here he had seen the tent settling down from heaven and resting, and a voice said unto him: "Here is the place where my people Israel shall pitch their tents." (Erastus Snow, "Address to the Pioneers," *Journal History*, July 24, 1880, ms.)

A VISION OF THE FUTURE

On that memorable day of July 24, 1847, right at the time when Brigham Young made the famous statement, "This is the place! Drive on," the Lord confirmed his previous revelations to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young by letting the Pioneer leader view in a vision

¹In Elder Snow's statement he was referring to a previous view of the Salt Lake valley that Elders Orson Pratt and John Brown had had two days earlier.

many things which would take place in the Salt Lake valley. Wilford Woodruff described this experience in his journal as follows:

This is one of the most important days of my life, and in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . We came in full view of the valley of the Great Salt Lake; the land of promise, held in reserve by God, as a resting place for his Saints.

We gazed in wonder and admiration upon the vast valley before us, with the waters of the Great Salt Lake glistening in the sun, mountains towering to the skies, and streams of pure water running through the beautiful valley. It was the grandest scene that we had ever beheld till this moment. Pleasant thoughts ran through our minds at the prospect that, not many years hence, the house of God would be established in the mountains and exalted above the hills; while the valleys would be converted into orchards, vineyards, and fruitful fields, cities erected to the name of the Lord, and the standard of Zion unfurled for the gathering of nations.

President Young expressed his entire satisfaction at the appearance of the valley as a resting place for the Saints, and felt amply repaid for his journey. While lying upon his bed in my carriage, gazing upon the scene before us, many things of the future concerning the valley were shown to him in a vision. (Wilford Woodruff, *Journal*, July 24, 1847, cited in Andrew Jenson, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, p. 77.)

When Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Orson Pratt, Erastus Snow, and others of the Pioneer leaders first saw the Salt Lake valley, they were not viewing the barren desert region covered with sunflowers, sage and salt flats—a country infested with millions of black crickets—as were many of their pioneer followers. These men of God were looking through the eyes of holy prophets; therefore, they saw the Great Basin as it would be in the future as a result of the industry and thrift of the people coupled with the blessings of the Lord. On a later occasion Wilford Woodruff described the entrance of the Pioneer band into the Salt Lake valley, and he pointed out exactly what Brigham Young beheld. To quote:

When we came out of the cañon into full view of the valley, I turned the side of my carriage around, open to the west, and President Young arose from his bed and took a survey of the country. While gazing on the scene before us, he was enraptured in vision for several minutes. He had seen the valley before in vision, and upon this occasion he saw the future glory of Zion and of Israel, as they would be, planted in the valleys of these mountains. When the vision had passed, he said: "It is enough. This is the right place, drive on." (Wilford Woodruff, *Utah Pioneers*, p. 23, cited in Roberts, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 224.)

Then Brigham and his associates entered the valley and joined Orson Pratt's group. He assured Elder Pratt that he had selected the right spot on which to locate the people and build the city. In fact, no man has been more convinced that God led the Saints to the Rocky Mountains than was Brigham Young. On July 28, only four days after his arrival, he wrote:

Some of the brethren talk about exploring the country farther for a site for settlement; I replied that I was willing that the country should be explored until all were satisfied, but every time a party went out and

returned, I believe firmly, they would agree this is the spot for us to locate. (*Journal History*, July 28, 1847, ms.)

Sometime later he said:

I do not want the people to understand that I had anything to do with our being moved here; that was the providence of the Almighty; it was the power of God that wrought out salvation to his people. I never could have devised such a plan. (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 4, p. 41.)

At the time of the gold rush in 1849, some of the Mormons were anxious to leave the barren desert region of Utah and migrate to California. Brigham Young again made a public announcement that God had led the Saints to this place. To quote:

We have been kicked out of the frying-pan into the fire, out of the fire into the middle of the floor, and here we are and here we will stay. God has shown me that this is the spot to locate his people, and here is where they will prosper. . . .

As the Saints gather here and get strong enough to possess the land, God will temper the climate, and we shall build a city and a temple to the Most High God in this place. We will extend our settlements to the east and west, to the north and to the south, and we will build towns and cities by the hundreds, and thousands of the Saints will gather in from the nations of the earth. This will become the great highway of nations. . . .

Take courage, brethren. . . . Plow your land and sow wheat, plant potatoes. . . . It is our duty to preach the gospel, gather Israel, pay our tithing and build temples. (James Brown, *Autobiography*, pp. 121, 122.)

THE VINDICATION OF A HUNDRED YEARS

Time has vindicated the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successor, Brigham Young, in their declarations that the Salt Lake valley and the surrounding intermountain region was the right place in which to establish God's chosen people and to build up Zion. A hundred years have passed, and Mormons have left a history literally filled with noble deeds and Herculean accomplishments made by a devout, God-fearing people. Credit and great honor have been brought to the intermountain west as the result of the contributions made by our pioneer forefathers in the building of this American frontier. Truly "This is the Place!"

In conclusion I want to bear testimony that I know that Jesus is the Christ and that I know that God lives. I am also thoroughly convinced that the Mormon pioneers were brought to this land under the direction of our Lord. May we, the descendants of the pioneers, ever honor that great heritage that is ours and live true to the ideals and high spiritual standards that they left for us. I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President George Albert Smith:

I am going to ask the people who are in this room this morning who are descendants of the first company of Pioneers that came into the valley on the 24th of July, 1847, to please stand up.

[A large number arose.]