

A Vision Given to President John Taylor

Salt Lake City, December 16, 1877.

I went to bed at my usual hour half past nine o'clock. I had been reading the revelations in the French Language. My mind was calm, more so than usual if possible to be so. I composed myself for sleep but could not sleep. I felt a strange stupor come over me and apparently became partially unconscious, still I was not asleep, nor awake with a strange far away dreamy feeling.

The first thing I recognized was that I was in the Tabernacle at Ogden sitting on the back seat in the corner for fear they would call upon me to preach, which, after singing the second time, they did by calling me to the stand. I arose to speak and said I did not know that I had anything special to say except to bear my testimony to the truth of the latter-day work. When all at once it seemed as though I was lifted out of myself, and I said "Yes I have something to say, it is this: some of my brethren present have been asking me what is coming to pass, what is the wind blowing up. I will answer you right here what is coming to pass shortly."

I was immediately in Salt Lake City wandering about the streets in all parts of the city, and on the door of every house I found a badge of mourning, and I could not find a house but what was in mourning. I passed by my own house and saw the same signs there and asked, "Is that me that is dead?" Something gave me an answer "No you'll live through it all."

It seemed strange to me that I saw no person on the street in my wandering about through the city. They seemed to be in their houses with their sick and dead. I saw no funeral procession, or anything of that kind, but the city looked very still and quiet as though the people were praying, and had control of the disease whatever it was. I then looked in all directions over the territory, east, west, north and south and I found the same mourning in every place throughout the land.

The next I knew I was just this side of Omaha. It seemed as though I was above the earth, looking down on it as I passed along on my way east. I saw the roads full of people, principally women, with just what they could carry in bundles on their backs, traveling to the mountains on foot, and I wondered how they could get there with nothing but a small pack upon their backs. It was remarkable to me that there were so few men among them. It did not seem as though the cars were running. The rails looked rusty and the road abandoned and I have no conception how I traveled myself.

As I looked down upon the people I continued eastward through Omaha and Council Bluffs which were full of disease and women everywhere. The states of Missouri and Illinois were in turmoil and strife, men killing each other, and women joining in the fight, family against family, cutting each other to pieces in the most horrid manner.

The next I saw was Washington and I found the city a desolation. The White House empty, the halls of Congress the same, everything in ruins, the people seemed to have fled from the city and left it to take care of itself.

I was next in the city of Baltimore and in the square where the monument of 1812 stands in front of St. Charles. And at the hotels I saw the dead piled up so as to fill the square. I saw mothers cut the throats of their own children for the sake of their blood, which they drank from their veins to quench their thirst and then lie down and die. The waters of the Chesapeake River and of the city were so stagnant and such a stench arose from them on account of the putrefication of dead bodies that the very smell caused death. And that was singular again; I saw no men except they were dead, lying in the streets, and very few women, and they were crazy mad, and in a dying condition. Everywhere I went I beheld the same all over the city, and it was horrible beyond description to look at.

I thought this must be the end. But no, I was seemingly in Philadelphia and there as in Baltimore everything was still. No living soul was to be seen to greet me, and it seemed as though the whole city was without an inhabitant. In Arch and Chestnut Street and in fact everywhere I went the putrefication of the dead bodies caused such a stench that it was impossible for any creature to exist alive, nor did I see any living thing in the city.

I next found myself in Broadway, New York, and there it seemed the people had done their best to overcome the disease. But in wandering down Broadway I saw the bodies of beautiful women lying stone dead, and others in a dying condition on the sidewalk. I saw men crawl out of the cellars and rob the dead bodies of the valuables they had on them, and before they could return to their coverts in the cellars, they themselves would roll over a time or two and die in agony. On some of the back streets I saw mothers kill their own children and eat raw flesh and then in a few minutes die themselves. Wherever I went I saw the same scenes of horror and desolation, rapine and death.

No horses or carriages. No buses or streetcars, but death and destruction everywhere.

I then went to the Grand Central Park and, looking back, I saw a fire start and just at that moment a mighty east wind sprang up and carried the flames west over the city, and it burned until there was not a single building left standing whole, even down to the wharves. And the shipping all seemed to be burned, and swallowed up in the common destruction and left nothing but a desolation where the great city was a short time before. The stench from the bodies that were burning was so great that it was carried a great distance across the Hudson River and Bay, and thus spread disease and death wherever the flames penetrated. I cannot paint in words the horror that seemed to encompass me around about. It was beyond description or thought of man to conceive. I supposed this was the end, but I was here given to understand that the same horror was being enacted all over the country, north, south, east and west, that few were left alive, still there were some.

Immediately after, I seemed to be standing on the west bank of the Missouri River opposite the City of Independence, but I saw no city. I saw the whole states of Missouri and Illinois and part of Iowa were a complete wilderness with no living human being in them. I then saw a short distance from the river twelve men dressed in the robes of the temple standing in a square or nearly so. I understood it represented the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem and they were with hands uplifted consecrating the ground and laying the cornerstones. I saw myriads of angels hovering over them and around about them and also an immense pillar of a cloud hover over them. And I heard the angels singing the most beautiful music. The words were "Now is established the Kingdom of our God and His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever, and the Kingdom shall never be thrown down, for the Saints have overcome."

And I saw people coming from the river and from different places a long way off to help build the Temple, and it seemed that the hosts of the angels all helped to get the material to build the Temple. And I saw some come who wore their temple robes to help build the Temple and the city and all the time I saw the great pillar of cloud hovering over the place.

Instantly I found I was in the Tabernacle at Ogden and yet I could see the building going on and I got quite animated in calling to the people in the Tabernacle to listen to the beautiful music that the angels were singing. I called to them to look at the angels as the house seemed to be full of them and they were singing the same words that I heard before "Now is the Kingdom of our God and His Christ established

forever and ever." And then a voice said, "Now shall come to pass that which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, That seven women shall take hold of one man saying, &c."

At this time I seemed to stagger back from the pulpit and F. D. Richards and someone else caught me and prevented me from falling when I requested Brother Richards to apologize to the audience for me because I stopped so abruptly, and tell them I had not fainted but was exhausted. I rolled over in my bed and heard the City Hall clock strike twelve o'clock.

Wilford Woodruff Journals, June 15, 1878