

The Earth is Defiled

Because of Transgression

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In a fateful prediction concerning the last days, the days in which the Lord would "*punish the hosts of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth,*" Isaiah thus voiced what was shown to him in prophetic vision:

"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." (Isa. 24:5; see also verse 21).

In the time of turmoil and shaking, involving men, institutions and the planet itself, in the days of pitfalls and snares whereby mankind would be deceived and entrapped, there would be some to rejoice in the recognition of an overruling Power; even in the dire events recorded, some would praise the Lord despite the din of world disturbance. See verses 13 to 15.

The earth is pictured as a defiled abode—this *because of the inhabitants thereof*, whose lamentable state is depicted as the

direct result of sin, which is *the transgression of the law*.

We cannot rationally construe the transgression here mentioned as specifically a violation of the Mosaic Law; for that is nowhere in Scripture called an everlasting covenant. Quite to the contrary, the Law, in the sense of the Mosaic code, was temporary and preparatory in character, and was abrogated and superseded by the Gospel (see Gal. 3:23-29); but the shed blood of Jesus Christ is distinctively called "*the blood of the everlasting covenant*." (Heb. 13:20).

Isaiah looked beyond the establishment of the Gospel through the ministry and atoning death of the Christ, and saw the falling away of the people as a result of sin. The sad conditions then existing in part and to reoccur in greater literalness, were seen also by Jeremiah, through whom the Lord spake, saying:

"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jer. 2:13).

The history of the declension of the Primitive Church furnishes evidence of a painfully literal fulfilment. As with the priest so with the people—they did *transgress the laws, change the ordinance and break the everlasting covenant* embodied in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Soon after the close of the apostolic ministry, the Church underwent rapid

internal deterioration, and developed a state of increasing perversion. Among the certain symptoms of this deadly malady were the following:

(1) The corruptng of the simple principles of the Gospel by the admixture of the so-called philosophic systems of the times.

(2) Unauthorized additions to the rites of the Church and the introduction of vital changes in essential ordinances.

(3) Unauthorized changes in church organization and government.

These were at once causes and effects—every succeeding manifestation of growing apostasy being the result of earlier declension and the cause of later and more pronounced departure.

Mystery was thrown about the simple and impressive ordinances of baptism and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and pagan ceremonials were combined therewith. Pomp and pageantry supplanted the soulful worship of early days, and oratory was elevated above inspiration and testimony, by which holy men of old had spoken *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. (See 2 Peter 1:21.)

The Church, thoroughly reprobate, created offices at pleasure and laid claim to secular authority, notwithstanding our Lord's avowal to Pilate, "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" While still boasting its Divine origin as founded by Jesus Christ, who refused earthly kingship, the Church lifted itself above all

kings and rulers, and arrogated to itself supremacy in the affairs of nations.

There could be no rejuvenation of an institution so corrupt, so thoroughly devoid of the gifts and graces of the Spirit, so wilfully guilty of having transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

The reestablishment of the Church by direct conferment from Jesus Christ became indispensable to the salvation of men. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms that restoration, with a restitution of all the earlier ordinances of the Gospel, and the renewed proclamation of the everlasting covenant, and this through Divine commission. By men's acceptance of this Gospel and compliance with its requirements, the earth may be cleansed from its defilement and mankind may be saved. And there is no other way.