

Prophecies Unfulfilled—Changes in the Configuration of the Globe—Miracles the Result of Laws not Yet Perfectly Understood—The Re-Formation of the Earth—Its Character During the Millennium—Its Purification By Fire—The New Heavens and the New Earth—The Gospel the Celestial law, and Only Passport to Existence on a Celestialized Earth

Discourse by Elder Orson Pratt, delivered in the Twentieth Ward Meetinghouse, Salt Lake City, Sunday Afternoon, Dec. 3, 1876.

The following passages of scripture were read—The 24th chapter of Isaiah, from the 1st to the 6th verses, and from the 17th to the 23rd verses; the 6th chapter of Revelation, from the 12th to the 17th verses; the 34th chapter of Isaiah, from the 1st to the 4th verses; and the 13th chapter of Isaiah, from the 6th to the 13th verses.

Elder Pratt then said—I have read these passages, not with the idea of selecting from them any one passage, but more particularly to impress upon the congregation the fact that something must take place which never has been fulfilled.

Since the day that Isaiah lived and prophesied among the people, you will admit, with me, that there never has been a universal destruction of all the wicked and the transgressors from off the face of the earth. There have been scores of millions of sinners upon the earth since the utterance of this prophecy to the present time, but the wholesale destruction spoken of has never taken place. You will all admit with me also that the signs which are to appear in the heavens, about the time of this universal destruction of the wicked, have not yet taken place. We are told not only that the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, but the stars shall refuse their shining. If only the sun were to be darkened, the heathen nations, that could not account for it, might say it had reference to some great eclipse, such as has occurred in different ages; but when they find that all the stars of heaven withhold their light, and there is not even so much as a glimmer of light, and the sun too becomes as black as sackcloth, they cannot impute it to an eclipse, for an eclipse would not destroy the light of the stars that are scattered over the concave of heaven. We are also told, in connection with this, that the earth is to be afflicted as well as the heavenly bodies; it is to roll to and fro like a drunken man, the mountains are to be broken down, and the whole earth is to be dissolved. No such thing has ever taken place since the day this prophecy was uttered; it is therefore yet to be fulfilled.

Again Isaiah in the 40th chapter has said that “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” Such an event as that has never occurred, for we have many mountains in all parts of the earth, and the valleys are not yet exalted, neither are the rough places made smooth. We are told that not only are the mountains to be broken down, and the valleys exalted, and the rough places made smooth, but the earth itself is to be dissolved. This agrees with the prophecies of the Psalmist David. He was permitted to see the great day of the coming of the Lord, and has described it, in many of his psalms; among other things which he says shall take place, is that the hills should melt like wax at the presence of the Lord. They of course will fall down by the force of gravity, and fill up the valleys; such an event has never taken place since the day the prophecy was uttered.

We are told also in another place by the Prophet Isaiah, how that the servants of God in those notable days should call upon the name of the Lord, saying, “Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations might tremble at thy presence,” which prayer shall be answered.

Another thing is spoken of, besides all these changes that I have named. There will be a great removal of certain

portions of the earth. "The earth is moved exceedingly," as contained in the 19th verse of the 24th chapter of Isaiah, and in the following verse, still referring to the changes that this earth is to undergo, it reads, "And shall be removed like a cottage." We are still further told in the same chapter that "the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down," etc.; that is, many portions of the earth which now lie buried will be thrown to the surface, and many portions which now are the upper crust of the earth will be turned under.

The earth is now divided into continents and islands. We may ask, are these to change their location? The answer is, yes. The Apostle and revelator John, in the 6th chapter of Revelation, tells us that he saw, in vision, after the opening of the sixth seal, among other remarkable things, that "every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Such islands as Great Britain will change their location, as well as those of the Pacific Ocean and all others in like manner; and I have no doubt there will be a vast change between the location of continents and the location of the great oceans and seas at that time. The earth will doubtless be rolled back to the position it formerly occupied. We read that there is to be a restitution of all things spoken of by the mouth of all the holy Prophets. If the earth is to be restored to its former condition, as it once existed soon after the creation, then, so far as continents and oceans are concerned, there will be a restitution of those portions of the globe, as well as many things not mentioned in prophecy.

These passages which I have read occurred to my mind principally after I came to this house. I had nothing particular to present to the congregation, nothing studied or prepared. I prefer to depend upon the spirit of the Lord to direct me when engaged in preaching the Gospel, and my mind seems to be directed to the great events that are to transpire in the overthrow and destruction of the wicked nations—the great events to transpire in which the sun will become black as sackcloth, and every star withhold its light and cast themselves down as the falling of figs from the fig tree, all of which will be very remarkable in their nature.

The Prophet Joel says, "it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come," etc. Do you suppose, my brethren, that the Lord would have inspired such men as the Psalmist David, the Prophets Isaiah, Joel, John the Revelator, as well as many others, to speak of events of this description, which were to take place in the latter times, if no such thing would transpire? No, certainly not. These things too are so frequently alluded to that we cannot have any dubiety upon our minds in regard to the design of the Lord.

I have no doubt a great many changes have taken place upon our globe since that great change wrought upon it at the time of the creation. There certainly was a great change wrought upon it then, for we are told that when the Lord organized the earth it was enveloped in a great ocean of water, there being no dry land in sight. But the Lord, by his power and word, or, in other words, by his immutable laws, caused that the waters should be gathered together into one place, and hence the dry land appeared. I do not suppose that this change was effected in the twinkling of an eye; I believe the Lord has certain established laws by which he accomplishes his wonderful works pertaining to all his creations. How long this submerged earth had an existence before the Lord commanded the great deep, that enveloped the whole surface of the same, to be removed, is not for me to say; no one can tell how many years, or thousands of years, or how many millions of years, this earth may have existed in the form of partial or imperfect organizations before this great event happened, of which Moses gives an account. The periods mentioned in the history, as recorded in the 1st chapter of Genesis, are represented as beginning with the evening and ending with the morning. Seven such periods are mentioned. How long these periods, called days, were, I cannot tell; it is very evident they were not governed by the rotation of the earth on its axis, because the sun did not give light during the first three days or periods. It was on the fourth day that the Lord caused the light of the sun to shine upon this little speck of creation. But there were three days prior to that, when the sun did not shine upon the earth. What then was to distinguish between the light and darkness we of course cannot say. There was an eternity of past duration, before the period, called "the first day." The materials we, as Latter-day Saints, believe existed from all eternity, the materials had no beginning; they were not created.

There is one particular to which I wish to call your attention. The ocean seems to have been gathered by itself,

when the dry land appeared, and whether or not there were any islands at that period of our globe's history, we are not informed. You might inquire—What has occasioned two great continents and two great oceans intervening between them, and how are we to account for the appearance of islands and seas as they now exist? These are the results of other changes since the days of the organization of this earth, as proclaimed by Moses. The flood, no doubt, produced some changes on the surface of our globe, but still I do not believe, for a moment, that it could have produced the changes we now see. So far as the location of the different islands and continents is concerned, we descend to a period since the flood. In the days of Peleg, we are told, the earth was divided. This is a very short historical notice of a very marvelous event. If we had the whole account of this occurrence precisely as it transpired, it would certainly be extremely wonderful. Supposing that the one great antediluvian continent, which must have existed prior to that time, were to be divided by several thousand miles of water, would not that be a most wonderful event?

It may be enquired, what natural laws could have performed such an event? I do not pretend to say that any regular, uniform laws exist by which it was accomplished; but there are laws, perhaps, that finite man does not comprehend and fully understand, which might occasion the division of the earth. The Lord has under his control all the laws of nature, whether uniform or not. It is just as easy for the Lord to cause water to stand up as perpendicular walls, instanced in the case of the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea, as it is to cause these waters to settle to their common level. What causes water to find its level? It is the power of God, and nothing else. We give it the name of gravitation; but the power of gravitation is nothing more nor less than the power God exercises upon the elements, producing uniform laws.

Has the Lord no other laws in operation but the law of gravity? Yes, he can cause the law of gravity to be in subjection to other laws. For instance, a certain man was cutting down wood with the Prophet Elisha when his axe fell into deep water, to all appearance lost; and the man was somewhat exercised about it, because the axe was borrowed. The Prophet, understanding the nature of certain laws higher than that of gravitation, exercised the power of the Priesthood with which he was endowed, commanding the iron to swim, and it did so.

Again, on another occasion, the Prophet Elisha, knowing that he must succeed the Prophet Elijah in the ministry, and that Elijah was about to be translated and taken to heaven, asked of him a certain favor before he ascended, namely, that a double portion of his (Elijah's) spirit might rest upon him. Elijah said in response, "Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou seest me, when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." It pleased the Lord to grant unto Elisha his desire, for he beheld the Prophet ascend to heaven in a chariot of fire, drawn by horses having the appearance of fire. He then took the mantle of Elijah, that fell from him, and with it he smote the waters of the Jordan, saying, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" And they parted hither and thither, and Elisha went over on dry ground. Here, then, we perceive a power greater than gravitation.

As we have already observed, when the children of Israel had passed over the Red Sea, the waters were thrown up like walls on either side of them; the Lord caused the same waters to flow down upon their enemies, totally destroying them.

Again, while Israel was journeying in the wilderness we are informed that they came to the river Jordan, and that as the Priests who bore the ark of the Covenant touched the water with the soles of their feet, the waters rose up in a heap, and all Israel passed over on dry ground.

From these simple testimonies we have shown that God controls the laws of nature. Again, the fact of the Prophet Elijah being taken up to heaven, records another instance of the laws of gravitation being overcome by a more powerful one. Again, the ascension of Jesus, after he had commissioned his disciples to preach the Gospel to all the world, was another instance of the law of gravitation being overcome by the power of God. Then let no person suppose that all the great events that will hereafter transpire upon the surface of land and sea, have got to take place by reason of some slow progressive changes, occupying hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions of years, according to the ideas of modern geologists. Can they show the way the Lord can govern and control these things, bringing about events, in the course of a very short time, that perhaps would take millions of years to accomplish by the mere progressive changes, such as are recognized by geologists? How easy it would be for that

same power to be made manifest, in commanding the great ocean to leave its present bed and to gather together in the polar regions in our globe. One may ask, What would hold them there? They now occupy the common level surface as near the center of gravity as they can, and sustain the centrifugal force exercised by the rotation of the earth on its axis. If they should be rolled back, whence they came; if a great equatorial continent, in one continuous belt, encircled the globe, and the two polar regions were covered with oceans, what would hold them in their position? It might be done without infringing particularly on the laws of gravitation. How easy it would be for the Lord to compress the polar regions of our globe, and cause the equatorial regions to rise higher, so as to balance the polar waters, and retain them in the arctic and antarctic regions.

It may be objected, that should such a condition exist, even though we should admit the power of God in thus dividing the waters, and giving us an equatorial continent, yet this would not protect the inhabitants of the equator from the burning heat of the sun, and it would be utterly impossible for the inhabitants of the earth to inhabit the equatorial region, if this should be the case. How easy it would be for the Lord to alter the position of the earth's axis, giving it a greater inclination to the plane of the ecliptic, so that the two tropics should extend thirty-five or forty degrees north and south of the equator. What effect would this have? It would have the effect of giving greater heat to the poles, and also of giving less heat to the equator.

The earth will be shaped into the form best adapted to the occupation of a higher order of beings. Now, children of mortality occupy this globe. In some portions of the earth we suffer extremes of heat and cold. The Laplander has guarded against this in his snow house, while the people of the torrid regions have to guard against intense heat. And there is much suffering by the inhabitants of the earth, in their present state of mortality, from the extremes of heat and cold. But in relation to the great event I have named, I have no doubt but what every motion and arrangement that the Lord will cause to take place upon the surface of our globe, will have a tendency to prepare it for the habitation of beings of a higher order of intelligence than those who now occupy it. In testimony of this, we will refer you to some few passages of Scripture. The inhabitants of the heavens, who now reside in the presence of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, do not always expect to reside there; they have anticipations as well as we. And they expect to receive another place or location than where they now reside. Have you not read that peculiar passage contained in the 5th chapter of the Revelation, in relation to the inhabitants of heaven? The Revelator, John, heard them sing a new and beautiful song, about the unsealing of a certain book—"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth," etc.

What! The inhabitants of heaven coming to reign on this earth? Yes. Some of you may say, "I should not think that heavenly people would want to leave the presence of God and the Lamb, where all is peace and happiness, where there is no sin to mar the peace of that blessed abode. I should not suppose that they could anticipate joy in coming back to this earth." But the earth is to undergo a change in which it will be sanctified and made glorious when the sinners are destroyed. When the Lord performs what I have read to you, namely, that the inhabitants of the earth are to be burned up, and few men left; and all the armies of the wicked slaughtered. And when the prediction of Isaiah is fulfilled, that the slain will be from one end of the earth to the other, and the earth changed in its position, and a beautiful climate introduced, and all the dry ground made habitable, and the rough places made smooth, the valleys raised, and the mountains leveled down, I think they will then delight to come here. Because this is their old home, where they once lived. "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

How will they reign? Will they come here as spiritual personages without bodies of flesh and bones? No. There will be a resurrection, and when these great events take place on the earth, which are so clearly predicted by so many of the ancient worthies, who held communion with God, the graves will give up the righteous dead. The Saints who were heard singing that new and beautiful song, even the spirit of the just, will come from the celestial paradise to claim their resurrected bodies, no more to be subject to death—they will be immortal and eternal. They will have intelligence in proportion to that exalted condition of their spirits and bodies, and the earth will be adapted to them

as a dwelling place. This is the reason why these changes are to take place.

Geologists say it would take some millions of years to effect any changes of the earth in regard to the location of its continents and islands, and a great number of intelligent readers are inclined to this belief. But there is a God who will disappoint them all, who will show forth his power, causing the earth to rock to and fro like a drunken man; a God whose power is able to cause the mountains to be cast down, and the valleys to come up. When it rains upon the exalted valleys, it will wash down the rich soil upon the rocky mountains which have sunk beneath, making them fertile; and thus the whole surface of the earth will become a fit abode for man in his improved and perfected state, whether immortal or mortal.

"Do you think," one may say, "there will be mortal beings living on the earth, when these heavenly hosts come?" Yes, and they will dwell together. What, people not subject to sickness, or to sorrow, or punishment, people whose bodies are celestial and immortal, who will endure in their bodies to all eternity! Will they mingle with mortal beings? Yes. Have we any Scripture to sustain us in this? Yes. Our Savior was immortal when he arose from the tomb, his body of flesh and bones was no longer sensitive to pain; it was a glorified, immortal, and eternal body. Could he mingle with the children of mortality? Yes, for on a certain occasion the Apostles, doubtless thinking the Savior to be dead, went to their nets, their former pursuit. But Jesus knowing their hearts, went to the seashore and there made a fire. By and by he called them to land, and they came. He took a fish and broiled it on the coals, and gave it to them to eat, and he ate with them. He was immortal, they were mortal. Was there any perceptible difference between the appearance of the Savior on this occasion, and his disciples? No; he did not permit his glory to shine forth, as he did on the Isle of Patmos, when John received his heavenly manifestations. His glory was withheld, and they had no difficulty in looking upon his person.

I have no doubt there will be a certain degree of the glory of the immortal beings withheld from the children of mortality, during the whole period of the millennium. Kings and priests will come here to reign, and will mingle freely among their children of whom they are ancestors. And those who are mortal can receive instruction from those who are immortal, that will prepare them for the time when the earth is to undergo a still greater change. The children of mortality will need this preparation in order to live when this earth is burning up, which is to be its final destiny.

When Jesus comes, the events that I have named will take place. The earth is destined to pass away; after these immortal beings have dwelt upon it for one thousand years, after Jesus has been here reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords, and people have become familiar with him and all the ancients, by and by the earth will be burned up. You may inquire, "What is the use of burning it up?" I tell you my reason why I suppose the earth will be burnt up. It has been cursed by reason of the fall. In the early ages God said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life," etc. That curse has not been fully removed to this day, the earth has groaned under wickedness. Its inhabitants have had to suffer all the inclemencies of a rigid climate or the intensities of heat and cold. Millions have thus suffered for many thousands of years, all in consequence of the curse that came upon this creation. This curse is not all to be removed at once, it will be removed, in part, during the Millennium. The curse will not occupy the whole face of the earth to the same extent during that time as it has during the days of wickedness. But so great has been the curse that God decreed that it should suffer death like unto man; it cannot escape it, the change must come, the final change, which is equivalent to death itself. The Prophet Isaiah speaks of the earth dying: "And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner." As it shall die, so shall all who dwell upon it. When shall it see death? Not until after the Millennium, after the reign of righteousness for the space of one thousand years; after, too, "the little season," during which period of time Satan will be loosed out of his prison. It will continue in its temporal state with a portion of the curse upon its face, until the devil shall gather together his armies at the end of the thousand years, when he will marshal them, bringing them up on the breadth of the earth, and compassing the camp of the Saints and the beloved city. Then the Lord will make the final change; then the last trump will sound, which will bring forth all the sleeping nations; they will come forth with immortal bodies no more to be subject to temporal death. They will come forth from their sleeping tombs, and the sea will give up the dead which is in it. The graves of the wicked will be opened, and they will come forth; and a great white throne will appear, as recorded in the 20th chapter of Revelation, and the personage who sits on it is

described. Jesus comes then in his glory and power, in a manner far greater than has ever been manifested on this earth before; so great will be the glory of him who sits upon the throne, that from before his face the earth and the heaven will flee away, and no place shall be found for them.

Will not that be a greater change than casting down the mountains, etc., which is to take place at the beginning of the Millennium? The earth is to be burnt by fire, returning to its original elements. It does not say there shall be no place found for the elements, but there shall be no place found for the organized world. Like ourselves, the organization of the mortal body will cease, it will be finally dissolved, and the elements of which it is composed will be scattered in space; but that same God that controls the laws by which it exists now will in due time, and when he sees proper, speak to these elements, and by his Almighty power they will again come together, and be formed into a new earth, as is clearly portrayed in the 21st chapter of St. John's Revelation. The Apostle not only saw the heaven and the earth pass away, but he saw "a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

How do you suppose this new earth will be made? Do you suppose the Lord will go away into the immensity of space, and gather together new materials and command them to be organized? No, he will take the same materials, the elements which will have been dissolved by fire, and he will command them again to be reorganized, adapting the resurrected creation to the condition of the inhabitants that will occupy it. It will then be far more glorious than it will appear, during the thousand years of rest; it will then be reorganized by Almighty God in the most perfect form, so that it shall be capable of eternal and everlasting endurance, no more to be dissolved, no more to suffer from the action of the elements one upon the other, as has been the case with this earth, during its temporal existence. But it will continue to all eternity, and who are to inhabit it? The Saints who have before lived upon it, during the seven thousand years of its temporal existence.

Have we any account to sustain us in this? Yes, for after John saw the new heaven and new earth, the next thing he tells us of is the population of the new earth. "I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

The earth then will be made new, immortal, eternal in its nature; and holy beings that John saw come down in this holy city will be its inhabitants. No more death, no more sorrow, etc.; in other words, this earth, this creation, will become a *heaven*. The heavens that exist now are innumerable to man. God has from all eternity been organizing, redeeming and perfecting creations in the immensity of space; all of which, when they are sanctified by celestial law, and made new and eternal, become the abode of the faithful former inhabitants, who also become immortal, through and by celestial law. They are the mansions referred to by the Savior—"In my Father's house are many mansions." In other words, we may say, In our Father's dominions are many mansions. They are not like mansions built by men, they are worlds of greater and lesser magnitude. The first grade are exalted, celestial bodies, from which celestial light will radiate through the immensity of space.

We are anxiously praying to dwell in the presence of God the Father, when we depart this life. Where will it be? He will dwell with man upon the earth. Will this confine him to this earth? No, not any more than the kings of the earth are confined to their palaces, or the city in which they may dwell. They have the right to visit the different portions of their dominions and even any parts of the earth. So will God our Eternal Father, when he selects this earth as a habitation, make it as one of his dwelling places, but he will have power to go from one celestial world to another, to visit the myriads of creations, as may seem to him good.

In thus referring to the changes that the earth must undergo we might ask, Are we living now so as to be prepared for all the dispensations of God's providence? Are we prepared to receive our inheritance upon this earth, when it shall be made eternal? If we keep the celestial law which God shall give to us; or in other words, if we are born first of the water by baptism, and then of the spirit by the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, and if we continue to walk in this spirit in newness of life, being new creatures before the Lord our God, and becoming sanctified by the

celestial law, even the law of the Gospel, we will then be prepared to inherit this creation, when it shall be made new, and sanctified, and become immortal.

If we are not thus prepared, where shall we go? God is the author of many creations besides those that are celestial. He will prepare a creation just adapted to the condition of such people—those who are not sanctified by the Gospel in all its fullness, and who do not endure faithful to the end, will find themselves located upon one of the lower creations, where the glory of God will not be made manifest to the same extent. There they will be governed by laws adapted to their inferior capacity and to the condition which they will have plunged themselves in. They will not only suffer after this life, but will fail to receive glory and power and exaltation in the presence of God the Eternal Father; they will fail to receive an everlasting inheritance upon this earth, in its glorified and immortal state. Therefore how careful the Latter-day Saints should be in order to merit the association of the happy throng whom John heard singing that new song. We desire our inheritance on this earth as well as they. If they could rejoice in anticipation of receiving an inheritance on the earth, how much more can we who know comparatively nothing of the joys of heaven, when our globe will be glorified, a fit habitation for immortal, glorified beings.

Let us keep the commandments of the Most High; let us so order our lives that we can have a claim upon the Father, looking forward to that period of time when these mortal bodies, which must slumber in the dust, will come forth from the grave, fashioned after the likeness of his most glorious body, to inherit the same glory with him. Amen.