

THE BETTER LAND.

"I hear thee speak of the better land;
Thou call'st its children a happy band;
Mother, oh, where is that radiant shore?
Shall we not seek it, and weep no more?
Is it where the flower of the orange blows,
And the fireflies dance through the myrtle
boughs?"

"Not there, not there, my child!"

"Is it where the feathery palm trees rise,
And the date grows ripe under sunny skies;
Or midst the green islands of glittering
seas;
Where fragrant forests perfume the breeze,
And strange bright birds on their starry
wings

"Bearing the rich hues of all glorious things?"
"Not there, not there, my child!"

"Is it far away, in some region old,
Where the rivers wander o'er sands of
gold—
Where the burning rays of the ruby shine,
And the diamond lights up the secret mine,
And the pearl gleams forth from the coral
strand—"

"Is it there, sweet mother, that better land?"
"Not there, not there, my child!"

"Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy;
Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy;
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair,
Sorrow and death may not enter there;
Time does not breathe on its fadeless
bloom;
For beyond the clouds, and beyond the
to yill tomb,

"It is there, it is there, my child!"
MRS. HEMANS.

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER ORSON PRATT

Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt
Lake City, on Sunday afternoon,
June 23, 1878.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

I will call the attention of the
congregation, to a portion of a prop-
hecy by Malachi, which will be
found in the last chapter of the Old
Testament.

"For behold the day cometh that
shall burn as an oven; and all the
proud, yea, all that do wickedly,
shall be stubble; and the day that
cometh shall burn them up, saith
the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave
them neither root nor branch."

"But unto you that fear my name
shall the Son of righteousness arise
with healing in his wings; and ye
shall go forth and grow up as calves
of the stall."

"And ye shall tread down the
wicked; for they shall be ashes under
the soles of your feet in the day
that I shall do this, saith the Lord
of hosts."

On arising, and on opening the
Bible, I happened to open to the
words which I have just read,
which were spoken through Mala-
chi, one of the last of the ancient
prophets. They are words very fa-
miliar to the Latter-day Saints; for
their attention has been often called
to them. In reading the prop-
hecies of the holy prophets, we
expect that that portion of them
which has not already been ful-
filled, will take place in its time
and in its season. We do not read
the Scriptures as most of the in-
habitants of the earth do, thinking
that they must be spiritualized. There
are scarcely any of the prop-
hecies but what this generation,
as well as some of the past genera-
tions, interpret as meaning some-
thing altogether different from the
reading of them. They look upon
inspired men as saying one thing
and meaning another, and the only
way to ascertain what meaning
they really wish to convey is to get
an uninspired man to give some
other meaning entirely different
from the literal construction of the
words of the inspired writer. There
are but few individuals, compara-
tively speaking, among the nations
of Christendom, who differ from the
prevalent belief, namely, that the
Bible is a book to be understood
only by the learning and wisdom
of man, that the uninspired preach-
er, who may be highly educated af-
ter the manner of men, is a great
deal better qualified to interpret
the things of God than he or they
through whom they were spoken.
The Latter-day Saints, who may
have been similarly trained, were
more or less disposed to entertain
such views; but when they em-
braced the everlasting Gospel, and
received of the Holy Ghost, even
that Spirit by which the Scriptures
were written, they were corrected
in their judgment, and learned that
the words of God would all be ful-
filled, which have not already

come to pass, and that they are to
be understood in the same light,
and in the same sense as we would
understand the writings of unin-
spired individuals, when plainly
and clearly written upon any spe-
cial subject. This is something
that every ordinarily intelligent
man, without any book-learning
whatever, is abundantly able to do,
especially when simple language,
easy of comprehension, is used.
For instance, when we get letters
and communications from our
friends abroad, we never think of
putting a different construction
upon their sentences, and claim
that they did not mean what
they had written. When,
therefore, the ancient prophets
predicted that "the day cometh,
that shall burn as an oven," and
that "the proud, yea, and all that
do wickedly, shall be stubble;
and the day that cometh shall burn
them up, saith the Lord of hosts,
that it shall leave them neither
root nor branch"—we must believe
that the prophet meant precisely
what he said. When we read in
the Book of Genesis about the rains
which fell from the heavens, caus-
ing a flood of waters to deluge the
earth, in fulfillment of a certain
warning message, which had pre-
viously been preached to the peo-
ple then living, by which they
were swept away and drowned, we
must believe that the inspired
writer who penned the words, de-
scribed the event as it occurred, so
far at least as the general facts are
concerned; and that the flood spoken
of was a literal body of water,
and that it did prevail upon all por-
tions of the earth. I do not say
that the flood did prevail, at the
same moment, upon all the face of
the earth, but before the floods
abated every part of the solid por-
tions of the earth, that were habit-
able, were covered by the waters.
How this was accomplished is not
given by the inspired writer, but is
left for us to conjecture. The Lord
has a great many ways and means
by which he could bring about an
event of this nature. For instance,
how easy it would be to drown all
the inhabitants of the temperate
and arctic regions by just merely
stopping the earth from rotating on
its axis, unless there should be an-
other miracle performed to prevent
the waters that are heaped up
around the equatorial regions from
flowing to the polar regions; they
would necessarily, as the earth be-
gan to cease or rotate more slowly
in its axial revolutions, it would
cause the waters of the equatorial
region to flow towards the two
polar regions. It is an easy matter
for a mathematician to demonstrate
the depth of the waters in any part
or latitude of our globe should such
an event take place or happen.
The waters in receding from the
great equatorial region would cover
up the great mountains on our east,
and we, in this altitude, would be
buried under water at least over a
mile in depth. I do not say that this
was the manner which the Lord
took in "breaking up the fountains
of the great deep." There may
have been other causes unknown
to us, but to say there never was
such an event is something entire-
ly unwarranted. Still, it may be
said, this would not cover all the
solid portion of the earth, but leave
the equatorial land still further ele-
vated above the ocean, and if all
the lands of the earth were to be
under water, how could that be ac-
counted for? Very easily. Cause
the earth to rotate on its axis more
swiftly than what it now does, say,
for instance, in one-half the time—
in 12 hours instead of 24—and you
would bury up all the equatorial
lands of our globe. How easy a
matter it would be for the Lord to
cause the earth to rotate more
swiftly, and then again to rotate
more tardily, and produce the ef-
fects ascribed to the flood.

When therefore we read that the
earth was once depopulated, except
a few individuals, who were saved
in the ark, why should it be
thought a thing incredible that the
Lord should again depopulate our
globe, not by a flood, but by devour-
ing fire. It may be said that we
cannot see how a universal fire can
prevail over all the face of the
earth. There are various ways by
which this could be accomplished.
How did the Lord cause fire in an-
cient times to break out among the
children of Israel, when they trans-
gressed his holy laws, and when
they murmured and complained
against God? Fire was sent forth
from his presence, for his presence
we are told, rested upon the taber-
nacle; he was in the tabernacle, and
his cloud was over the tabernacle;

and fire went forth from this cen-
tre, or the place where the Lord
chose to manifest and show forth
his glory, and it destroyed many of
the people. You may say, "But
this was a supernatural fire that
proceeded from the presence of
God, from the tabernacle, consum-
ing thousands of transgressors." I
would ask, cannot that same Being
who was able to produce this de-
struction by fire upon a few thou-
sands and individuals cause it to be more
extensive and more universal in its
operation? Has he not the same
power to produce a supernatural
fire over all the earth; even to the
consuming of "all the proud, yea,
and all that do wickedly," burning
them up literally, their bodies be-
coming as "ashes," as a farmer
would let fire to and burn up the
stubble of his fields? Well, you
say, "If we admit that the first was
supernatural, that God did actually
burn the transgressors among Israel
by fire, we are willing to admit
that the same Being that could do
this upon a small scale, could per-
form a similar work on a universal
scale." That is very reasonable to
admit. But then, perhaps the
Lord may not see proper to do this
work of burning in the latter-days
altogether upon a supernatural
principle; he may, perhaps, bring
it about by certain physical forces
or laws, by certain changes that
may be wrought upon our ele-
ments; for the Lord holds in his
own hands all the elements, and
not only those of this little globe of
ours, but all the elements that com-
pose the universe; they are in his
hands, he can give instructions and
they are made subservient in the
accomplishing of his great and
wise purposes. Now, there is in
the very air which we breathe, and
which all animated beings, more or
less, breathe, and by which they
live—a principle of heat;
and when this heat in its
latent form is evolved, or comes
forth from the constituents of the
atmosphere, would there not be a
sufficient amount to produce this
revolution upon the earth? Is there
not sufficient heat not only to
burn up the wicked and the proud,
but to cause the very elements of
our globe to melt by its intensity?
thus fulfilling another prophecy
which says, "the hills melted like
wax at the presence of the Lord,"
and yet another prophecy, which
says, the mountains shall flow
down at His presence like melted
substance, run like rivers, in conse-
quence of the intensity of the heat,
connected with the elements of
which our atmosphere and moun-
tains are composed.

Again, independently of the lat-
ent heat which is connected with
the atmosphere of our globe, is He
not able to cause the great centre
of our system, the sun, to give
forth more heat sufficient to con-
sume the wicked and melt the
earth by its intensity? Yes, I re-
collect reading in one of the prop-
hecies of Isaiah, in relation to
this matter. I recollect reading too
in the revelations of St. John that
men should be scorched with great
heat. Rev. chap. 16, verse 8. It
was to be one of the great judg-
ments of the latter-days, as seen
by that inspired man. And Isaiah,
in speaking on this subject, says,
"Moreover the light of the moon
shall be as the light of the sun,
and the light of the sun shall be
sevenfold," etc. Suppose the heat
should be increased in the same
proportion that the light is increas-
ed; or, in other words, supposing
that our thermometers, when
standing at a hundred degrees
Fahrenheit, should be increased to
700 degrees Fahrenheit, what would
be the effect? A general conflag-
ration over the whole face of the
globe would be produced, thereby
fulfilling ancient as well as mod-
ern prophecy.

But we will pass on. It is not
for us, unless we have some defi-
nite instructions by the word of
God, to tell how he is going to
accomplish his great purposes. It
is sufficient for us to know that he
will do it. We are told this burn-
ing is to be universal, so far as all
the proud, and all that do wickedly
are concerned. It seems, then, it
is to be one of the last destructions
of the wicked. Prior to this there
will be numerous destructions, by
way of earthquakes, plagues, hail-
storms, wars, etc., that will pre-
vail and that will sweep away
millions from the face of our
globe. But the great judg-
ment that is to cleanse the earth
from all sin, is to be by the element
of fire. "But," inquires one, "do
you think there will be many in
that day, that will be proud and

wicked? Will they not be mostly
converted, and consequently es-
cape this great conflagration, as
Noah escaped being drowned?" I
will answer this by repeating an-
other prophecy, that now occurs to
my mind, recorded in the 24th
chapter of Isaiah. This man of God
saw the period of time when the
earth shall reel and fro like a
drunken man; and he saw that glo-
rious day when the Lord of hosts
shall be about to reign in Zion and
in Jerusalem. And among other
things he saw in vision was that
the earth became defiled under the
inhabitants thereof; "because,"
says the Prophet, "they have
transgressed the laws, changed the
ordinance, broken the everlasting
covenant." Plainly showing that
they were to be a corrupt people; a
people who, for instance, would
change the ordinance of baptism,
from immersion to sprinkling, or
pouring, or doing it away altogeth-
er, and in the same manner chang-
ing the various ordinances of the
gospel from the original form in
which the Lord revealed them. He
says, through the mouth of his prop-
het, that the people that should be
guilty of this great wickedness
should be visited with fire; "the in-
habitants of the earth are burned
and few men left." This is a little
more definite. We learned through
Malachi that they should be de-
stroyed both root and branch—no
branch of wickedness, no roots of
wickedness left; but it does not
give us the proportion; between the
righteous and the wicked. But
Isaiah gives us a little further clue
to this matter. To the query, how
many are to be overtaken by this
last great and overwhelming judg-
ment, Isaiah would answer, "the
inhabitants of the earth are burned
and few men left." What, only a
few persons to be converted, only a
few to receive the true gospel, and
be prepared for the coming of the
Bridegroom; only a few people to
escape this awful desolation? So
says the Prophet Isaiah; that is, few
in comparison to the great and nu-
merous population of our globe.
Even some few millions would be
few compared with the twelve hun-
dred millions that inhabit the
earth. Isaiah, in the same chap-
ter, in describing the glory of his
personal reign on the earth, says
that "Then the moon shall be con-
founded, and the sun ashamed,"
because of the superior light that
will attend the presence of the be-
ing who is to reign in Zion and in
Jerusalem. The Lord causes the
natural light of the sun and
the heat thereof; he causes the
natural light of the other lumina-
ries that twinkle in yonder
heavens, and also the heat which
proceeds from their bodies. Now,
if he can produce such intense heat
by such bodies as our sun; if he can
cause the surrounding worlds to be
heated and to receive a certain tem-
perature by the radiation of light
and heat; if the sun can produce
such a high temperature upon our
earth, existing some 90 millions of
miles away, why not the Lord be
able to produce a greater light and
heat if necessary, to sweep off the
wicked, and to cause the earth in a
moment, as it were, to feel the
power of that heat, even to its melt-
ing like wax, before his presence? But,
you may ask, why not this
heat destroy the righteous, as well
as the wicked? Have not the right-
eous often times been burned at
the stake? have they not been con-
sumed to ashes, by the power of
the wicked? And why should this
intense heat, of which you are
speaking, which is to destroy the
wicked root and branch, not affect
the righteous as well? Let us ex-
plain. Before this day of burning,
there will be no righteous on the
earth. Not one? No, not one.
"What is to become of them?" The
Apostle Paul informs us that, "The
Lord himself shall descend from
heaven with a shout, with the voice
of the Archangel, and with the
trump of God; and the dead in
Christ shall rise first. Then we,
which are alive and remain, shall be
caught up together with them in
the clouds to meet the Lord in the
air." It seems, then, that the right-
eous that sleep in their graves are
to arise at this time, to be caught
up with those living on the earth;
who will be found sufficiently right-
eous. Now, suppose they should not
ascend to meet the Lord, but should
remain on the earth, and he saw
proper to preserve them from this
devouring fire, could he do it? Cer-
tainly, and on the same principle
as he preserved the three Hebrew
children in the midst of the fire.
We are told, in connection with
this remarkable preservation of life,

that there was not so much as the
smell of fire on their garments, nei-
ther was a hair of their heads in-
jured, while some of the wicked,
when they were in the act of cast-
ing these young men into the fur-
nace, which had been heated seven
times hotter than was usual for
them, were devoured themselves.
Yet the righteous were spared, re-
ceiving no harm whatever. Now,
that same God who did preserve
the three Hebrew children in the
midst of the most terrible ordeal
which they passed through, could
preserve the righteous on the earth
if he saw proper to do so. But he
will take them up into the cloud,
and they will be with him when
he comes. But, you may say,
"Have you not said that when he
comes the sun will hide his face in
shame, etc., therefore will not that
glory which surrounds the person-
age of the Savior consume the right-
eous after they are taken up?" Not
at all; they will not be subject
to the devouring element of
fire, even though they have not as
yet been changed to immortality;
for the time, for the righteous who
remain alive, to be changed, will be
as much as a thousand years after
they are caught up and after they
descend upon the earth; after there
shall have been generation upon
generation here upon the earth;
then, at the sound of the last trump,
the Apostle Paul informs us, that
those who are righteous shall be
changed in the twinkling of an
eye. They are not to undergo this
change, when Jesus comes, at the
beginning of the thousand years'
reign, but after the thousand years
are ended, at the sound of the last
trump, which shall awaken and
call forth the sleeping nations of
the wicked from their graves, then
the righteous, who remain in the
flesh, will be changed in a moment;
and after that time there will be no
more mortality upon the earth.
"But," you may say again, "we
can hardly believe these great mir-
acles will take place as you say, ac-
cording to prophecy." Supposing
you cannot, does your unbelief
make the predictions of the ser-
vants of God without effect? Sup-
posing, for instance, we should all
disbelieve, excepting eight souls, as
was the case with the ante-deluvian
world, would our unbelief subvert
the word of God? No. The Lord
is a God of miracles, or, in other
words, he is a God of power, and
he operates upon the materials of
our globe, according to his own good
will and pleasure. When he burns
up the wicked, when he causes the
elements to melt with fervent heat,
when he causes the mountains to
flow down, and melt like wax be-
fore his presence, all this does not
destroy one particle of matter, but
only changes matter from one con-
dition to another. There is not a
particle of the materials of our
globe that will be annihilated, they
will all exist; and although the
time should come when the intense
heat should be such as to disperse
the materials of our solid globe, and
convert the great and mighty deep
into gaseous substances, and separ-
ate the elements, and the water shall
cease to exist as either steam or
water; although the time should
come when the hydrogen and the
oxygen, which possess the great
bulk of the water upon our globe,
should become gases, yet the
Lord could reorganize these ele-
ments, so scattered in space, by his
power, bringing them together
again by his law and by his word,
making a new world, and creating
a new heaven, and a new earth,
wherein, says the Apostle Peter,
shall dwell righteousness. This
new earth, which is to be created,
is not to be inhabited by the dis-
ciple and wicked, as is now the
case with the present world; there
will be an entire change in the
circumstances of the fall will not be found
in either, and consequently there
will be no more mortality upon the
dition of the earth, and also the
condition of the human family, the
new creation, neither sorrow, nor
sighing, nor weeping; neither will
there be any more death; for the
former things will have passed
away, and all things will become
new. There will be but one gov-
ernment, not several hundred dif-
ferent forms of government, but
one form will prevail upon the new
creation, inhabited by immortal
beings. All these changes are
what the Latter-day Saints are
looking for. We do not read these
prophecies, and then undertake to
change them, and tell our hearers
that they must be understood to
mean something else, in some
spiritual sense. We do not tell
them that this day of burning is a