

THIS SERMON IS A REGULAR WEEKLY FEATURE

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle.

THE NECESSITY FOR THE MILLENNIUM.

"Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; whom the heavens must retain until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."—Acts iii, 19-21.

Brooklyn, N. Y., April 8.—Pastor C. T. Russell of Brooklyn Tabernacle preached here twice today to splendid audiences. One of his discourses was entitled, "The Overthrow of Satan's Empire." The other, which we report, was on the necessity for the Millennium from the text above quoted. Pastor Russell said:—

Respecting two matters there can be no question:—

(1) That the early Church thoroughly believed in a Millennial Kingdom, hoped for it, prayed for it—"Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

(2) It is equally certain that today the doctrine of the Millennium is tabooed as "out of date"—out of harmony with the views of the Higher Critics and Evolutionists, who are filling practically all the chairs in our colleges and the majority of the pulpits of Christendom.

What has led to this radical change on the part of the religious wise men of all denominations? Have they taken a step in advance or are they departing from the path—from the teachings of the inspired Word of God? That they have left the Word of God, that they make light of it, that they profess far more wisdom and ability than the writers of the Bible and a higher intellectual inspiration than they, is indisputable. The question for us is, Will Christians in considerable numbers follow these leaders away from God, away from all Divine revelation? Will we put our trust in literary princes who claim the right to instruct the world, not by Divine appointment or authority, but by virtue of their large amount of self-esteem?

The present day concept of the Church of Christ is that God planted it amongst men as leaven in a batch of dough with the intent that it should propagate itself until the entire mass would be leavened. But the Bible apostolic concept of the Church's message is the very reverse of this—that it is planted in the world, not with a view to converting the world, but on the contrary to keep itself separate from the world and to draw to itself "As many as the Lord your God shall call" of the pure in heart—to sacrifice earthly interests for Divine interests, unto death, and later, by the First Resurrection, to enter into the heavenly glory of the Redeemer as his "Bride," his "Wife," his "Joint-Heir" in the Kingdom glory and the Kingdom work. And the work of that Kingdom is set forth to be the "blessing of all the families of the earth."

The two views are so radically opposite that none should confuse them in their minds. If one is right, the other is wrong. If one is Scriptural, the other is unscriptural. In the above item Dr. Brown admits that the Scriptural view entertained by the early Church contemplated the Church in suffering and in a temporary or tabernacle condition in the present life and promised a share with Christ in his reign in power and great glory, as God's Kingdom during the Millennium. The safe, proper, the right course is to go back and take up afresh the doctrine of the Millennium—the doctrine that the faithful of the Church now being tried and tested will constitute the glorious Kingdom of God's dear Son after their change from earthly to spirit conditions in the "First Resurrection" (I Corinthians xv, 42-44).

The Laymen's Movement.

God bless the Christian Endeavor and Epworth League and Students' Missionary League and the Laymen's Movement, all intent on "Storming the world for Jesus." We bear them witness that they have a zeal for God which we greatly admire and would encourage. But their zeal is "not according to knowledge," and is therefore considerably misdirected. To any one of logical mind, who will reason from statistics, the thought of converting the world by singing a few rousing hymns or holding a few enthusiastic meetings for the collection of money! money!! money!!! would be childish. We do not despise childlike-ness. We have all had our share. But we all should say with the Apostle, "When I was a child, I spake as a child and understood as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things" (I Corinthians xiii, 11).

"Christian people have been feeling themselves long enough!" Yes, it is as absolutely irrational to think of converting the world, as it is unscriptural to believe that God ever gave us that impossible commission. The United States census reports show that there are twice as many heathen today as there were a century ago. The word heathen carries to many a very wrong impression. Many noble-hearted Christians have gone as missionaries to the heathen wholly unprepared for what they met—intelligent reasoning ability, etc. They found that the heathen were full of questions, logical questions, too, which they as Christians had never thought of, and which they were wholly unprepared to

answer. Comparatively few of the missionaries are able to hold their own in argument with intelligent people in India, China, and Japan. There is no danger of their converting those people. There is more danger of their losing their own faith in the Bible, because of their misapprehension of some of its teachings—respecting the mission of the Church, the hope of the Church and the hope of the world!

Missionaries are thus handicapped! Full of commendable zeal they leave our shores to tell the heathen that their forefathers have gone to eternal torment and that they are going there, too, unless they accept Christ. It is a rude awakening to be asked where hell is? and why God should have condemned them and their forefathers to such a horrible eternity? and how this could be true and yet he be a God of pity, compassion, Love? The heathen ask, Why the different denominations—the different theories of the terms of salvation—by Water, by Election, by Free Grace, by joining the Church, etc. The missionary, wholly unable to answer the adult native, gathers children about him, starts a school and does all he is able, perhaps, to justify his presence in a foreign land—helping the sick and doing many other acts of kindness which are very commendable, whether from a religious or humanitarian standpoint.

Preach the Gospel to All Nations.

Our Lord's instruction was that his people should preach the Gospel in all the world for a witness—not to convert all the world, but for a "witness" to all the world. The mission of the Gospel is to select the Kingdom class, a "little flock." The first opportunity to become members of this Royal Priesthood was offered to the Jews and, after the gathering of a remnant from them, and after their national rejection, the message was to go to the whole world irrespective of national lines, boundaries or language—anybody, everybody having the "hearing ear," was to be instructed respecting Christ and the opportunity of becoming his disciples by a full consecration of mind and body, time and talent, even unto death. These were to be promised the reward of a share in the First Resurrection, to be members of the Royal Priesthood which, during the Millennial Kingdom of Messiah, will bless all the remaining families of mankind—all the non-elect.

We are not complaining about the failure to convert the heathen! We are not faulting the missionaries! We are taking the Bible stand that all of God's purposes are being accomplished; that God's Word is accomplishing "that whereto it was sent" (Isaiah lv, 11); that it was not sent to convert the world, but to gather an "elect" sample or "first-fruits" from all nations (Revelation xiv, 4). Let civilizing influences continue in heathendom, as well as in Christendom. But let all Christians, missionaries and others, know assuredly that their labor is not in vain if they are seeking for the Lord's jewels to the best of their ability. I am in touch continually with laborers in India and Africa and well know that the pure Gospel of Christ is not greatly affecting their teeming millions. But the Gospel of the Kingdom is seeking out, blessing, sanctifying, happyfying, encouraging some, here and there; some, who have ears of faith to hear, eyes of faith to see, and obedient hearts to obey the "call" to suffer with Christ and by and by to reign with him for the effectual blessing of all the families of the earth, by uplifting the willing out of their present conditions of sin and degradation and death.

The Millennium a Necessity.

We have shown the value and necessity for the doctrine of the Millennium—that all Christians who would hold fast to their Bibles as a faith-anchor and who would make progress in their study of the Word and be co-laborers with God in the gathering of "the elect" need to see that the elect only are now called to be heirs of the Kingdom for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come." They need to see that that Kingdom is God's provision for the future blessing of the non-elect. They need to see that the Bible does not teach, as many of them suppose, that the saints are called of God to sit in the heavenly balcony and look over at the non-elect in eternal anguish, and hear their cries.

Next let us note that the Millennium itself is an absolute necessity for the world, according to the statistics of the worldly-wise. Many college professors and D. D.'s are inclined to speak glibly of the Second Coming of Christ being far in the future—"fifty thousand years yet," say some. But evidently these learned gentlemen have not used their educational advantages in connection with such statements. Any school boy can figure up what the population of the earth would be one thousand years from now, taking the present population as per the census at sixteen hundred millions and the ratio of increase as shown by the census reports at 8 per cent in ten years. The total would show 3,375,325,000,000 population for the year 2000 A. D.—

more than 2,000 for each person now living.

What would humanity do if the earth were crowded to that extent? Where would the necessary food, fuel and clothing be found? Computing all the tillable portion of the earth at twenty-five million square miles or sixteen billion acres would give but one acre for the support of two hundred and ten people, or less than five square yards each. At the close of a second such period, 3000 A. D., at the same rate, there would be ten persons for each square foot of standing-room. In other words they would stand fifteen deep on each other's heads. What shall we think of the wisdom that tells us that the Millennium is fifty thousand years off? The answer is found in Isaiah's prophecy (xxix, 14).

Are we asked how the Millennium if at once introduced would avert the difficulties of the first statement, two hundred and ten people for each acre of the habitable earth? We reply that the Scriptures clearly intimate that the rapid increase of our race is associated with man's fallen condition; as our Creator declared to mother Eve after her disobedience, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrows and thy conception" (Genesis iii, 16).

The Earth Shall Yield Her Increase.

The Scriptures also intimate that with the return of humanity towards perfection the average increase will be less, and that eventually the human family will come to the condition where there will be neither marriage nor giving in marriage, and where sex conditions will be lost in a uniform standard of humanity embodying the qualities at present displayed in the two sexes. Further, God's promise for the Millennium is that under his blessing the earth will yield her increase and the waste places be reclaimed, springs breaking forth in deserts. Furthermore, recognizing the Divine power in connection with the matter we can readily see how vast continents can be raised in the Atlantic and in the Pacific Ocean. But aside from these miracles which properly enough could accompany the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, what can the world who ignore the Bible expect? In other words what shall they expect who claim that the present order of things is to continue, saying, "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the world?" (II Peter iii, 4).

Some may inquire, What about the resurrection of the millions who have died? We reply that the world has been only gradually working up to its present dense population. The people living in the world for the past six thousand years, according to what we believe are trustworthy evidences, would number altogether about twenty thousand millions. But more than twice that number could be buried in the State of Texas in separate graves and more than eight times that number could find standing room in Texas, as a school-boy with his pencil could readily demonstrate.

But we need not look a thousand years ahead. The world will find itself in great trouble very shortly unless the Millennium be ushered in. Already there is a shortage of timber. What will be the condition of things one hundred years from now? Already our capitalists are buying up the coal deposits on speculation, realizing that its rapid consumption is making it more valuable every year. Already geologists are calculating the number of tons of coal not yet mined and telling us that with the present average of increase in the consumption of coal the entire supply of the world will be exhausted in less than two hundred years. What will be the price of coal as the vanishing point is neared? and how will mankind do without it, and without wood for fuel unless the Millennium come promptly with its miraculous provisions—the taking of fuel from our atmosphere, and from water, by methods which will, no doubt, be simple, when mankind come to understand them fully, but which at present are so expensive as to be of little service.

Other scientific men have been studying the increase of insanity and telling us that progress in this direction is terrific. Some have estimated that in less than two hundred years the entire world, at the present rate, will be insane. How opportune it would be for the Millennial Kingdom of the great Life-Giver to be ushered in with its uplifting influences, mental, moral and physical!

Last but not least the combination of wisdom and selfishness in our day, known as Unions and Trusts, is so influential that prices in every commodity are rising. Yet the trusts are not quite ripe yet. Their managers have not fully learned their power. Gradually the upper and the nether millions will apparently be drawn closer together, while necessity will force the masses through the hopper. How great would those "giants" become within another century or so, if the Millennium be not ushered in in the interim to "lift the poor and needy out of the dunghill"—using the scriptural figure of the work of the Kingdom! (Psalm cxlii, 7).

My friends, let us stick to the Bible and its Millennial theory. So doing we will be guided by the wisdom from on high and enabled to pray with the spirit and the understanding also, "Thy Kingdom come; they will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," and to labor intelligently as co-workers with God! Let us prepare as pupils in the School of Christ for the great work wherunto God has called us by the Gospel Message. "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus; Come quickly!" "Thy Kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth, even as in heaven"

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