

THIS SERMON IS A REGULAR WEEKLY FEATURE

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle.

PASTOR RUSSELL HOMEWARD BOUND

"As the Waters Cover the Great Deep" (Isaiah xi, 9).

Pastor Russell is returning to America in good condition after having addressed the public of Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, Warsaw, Russia, Rome and Jerusalem—in all forty times. His largest audiences were at London, about 7,000, with Glasgow a good second.

Mid-Ocean, May 29.—As I look abroad and see water, water everywhere, without a speck of land in sight, and as I reflect that we are passing over varying depths, some of which are as great as five miles, I am reminded of the promise in the Lord's Word that ultimately the whole earth, the world of mankind, shall have such an abundant knowledge of the Creator and the Redeemer, as to be fitly illustrated by the depths of the sea. I have therefore chosen as my text the words, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." I remember also the very similar promise by the Lord through the Prophet (Habakkuk ii, 14), "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." I am reminded also of the Prophet's declaration that the time will come when "Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess" (Isaiah xiv, 23). And again "That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And I am also reminded that in that day, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah xxxi, 34). The question properly arises, To what extent shall we consider these statements literally true? What kind of fulfillment should we expect them to have?

If we look out upon the heathen world, however sympathetic we may be in respect to foreign missionary work, doing all in our power to make known to the heathen the grace of God, and the great Redeemer, we are nevertheless compelled to admit that there is absolutely no hope of our ever causing every knee to bow, and every tongue to confess Christ in heathen lands, even as we have long ago given up hope of accomplishing such work in civilized lands. The work is too great for us, and the errors of heathendom are too deeply seated to be quickly eradicated. Government statistics show us that there are twice as many heathen today as there were a century ago. If, therefore, any of us had been flattered ourselves respecting our ability to accomplish the conversion of the world, it is time for us to acknowledge our error and to look to the Lord, realizing that in him alone is the world's hope. Doubtless this is just the lesson that the Lord wishes us to learn. He does not wish us to give up our efforts to "Do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially the household of faith," for our own blessing is associated with such activity on behalf of others. But God does wish us to realize that of ourselves we are unable to cope with the situation. He wishes us to realize that only through the establishment of the Kingdom of God's dear Son can the glorious blessings of the Millennium ever be hoped for. Alas! We must admit, and should feel deeply humble by the admission, that even in civilized lands, the number of footstep followers of the Lamb of God is very few. The number who are "walking, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" in civilized lands is very few, in comparison with the population as a whole. We are not in this setting ourselves as judges of the hearts of our fellow-creatures—remarkably few make any pretension to walking in the "narrow way," which alone now leads to life everlasting (Matthew vii, 14).

The Necessity For Knowledge.
Many dear Christian people, desirous of thinking well of the heavenly Father, are so befogged with the teachings of the past, that they try to imagine that the way to eternal life is not so narrow as the Master said; they try to imagine that somehow the heathen will be saved in their ignorance, notwithstanding the Apostle says, "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?" (Romans x, 14). And again, his assurance that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv, 12).

The error from the past which led to this inconsistency is the teaching that all of the heathen are going to eternal torture, and that they never will have an opportunity of accepting Christ in the future. They rebel against the thought which has come down from the dark ages that God foreknew the ignorance of the heathen and predestinated their eternal torture; that they should not hear of the only name under heaven or given among men whereby they might be saved and fixed their en-

vironments so that they never heard. The whole difficulty, we see, lies in the fact that God's people in the past have not studied his Word as they should have done. Some of us subscribed to one creed, and some to another, saying to ourselves, Our creed is not satisfactory, but it is probably as free from error as other creeds. We consoled ourselves with the thought that all Christendom was considerably befogged, and we no more than others. Some of us probably tried to satisfy our minds by saying that those features of our creeds which dishonored God, and implied his lack of wisdom, or worse, his willingness but lack of justice, or lack of power—that these things were mysteries which must be believed, although they could not be reconciled with human reason and common sense. Some of us even tried to persuade ourselves that we were exercising extraordinary faith in these matters, but in reality we were merely ignorant of God's Word, and credulous of the wisdom of our creed-makers of the past.

True Light Now Shining.
But now, thank God, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand" (Romans xiii, 12). "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Romans xiii, 11). The evidence that we are in the morning of the new dispensation multiplies on every hand! We are evidently in the period which the Bible declares as "The day of God's preparation." God is preparing to usher in the long-promised period of blessing and refreshment, which he has foretold through all the holy prophets. The wonderful inventions of our day along the lines of chemistry, steam and electricity are fulfillments of the wonderful "Day of Christ," which is nearing. God's people have failed of great blessings in not sooner noticing this fact. We stood, as it were, with our backs toward the East, looking for the sun to rise in the West; we were looking to our own efforts to convert the world, rather than looking to the Lord from whom alone must come the help. Hence the glow in the East had assumed considerable proportions before we noticed it—and many of our brethren are still looking to the West, and angrily refuse to turn and follow the dawn of the New Dispensation, which now may be so clearly seen by the eye of faith.

Let us note well the Apostle Peter's words, assuring us that the vision he had on the Mount of Transfiguration made a deep impression upon him. He tells us, nevertheless, that "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts"—the "parousia" (presence) of Christ, the "Morning Star."

Knowledge a Necessity.
But admitting the promise of the Scriptures that the knowledge of the Lord shall be worldwide and ocean deep—that every creature shall be brought to an accurate knowledge of the truth, in due time (I Timothy ii, 4-6), wherefore is the necessity for this? Is knowledge really indispensable to salvation? Is it not written in the Scriptures of the Apostles Peter and John, that "The people perceived that they were ignorant and unlearned men?" If their ignorance and lack of learning did not hinder them from having God's favor, and obtaining salvation through Christ, and even obtaining Apostleship, why should so much stress be laid upon knowledge? Does God really care for knowledge? Has he predetermined that all who would be in his favor must be educated, and that he cares naught for the ignorant? Do we not read to the contrary that, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (I Corinthians i, 26, 27). "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?" (James ii, 5).

Very true, we answer. With God the wisdom of this world is foolishness, and with this world, the wisdom of God is foolishness. Knowledge may therefore be viewed from two standpoints. So far as worldly knowledge commending any man or woman to God, or making any man or woman more fit for divine favor, we believe the contrary to be true. Unwillingly we are forced to the conclusion that the great colleges of the world are the most destructive agencies in the earth, as respects the Divine revelation, the Bible, and the true knowledge of God, which is essential to salvation and eternal life. We therefore sharply discriminate between earthly knowledge and heavenly knowledge, and between the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God.

Our Lord Jesus gave us the key to this question of the importance of knowledge in relationship to our attainment of eternal life. He said, in praying to the Father, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John xvii, 3). Only such as attain to this knowledge may have eternal life. Con-

sequently we see at a glance that remarkably few of our race have thus far attained to the degree of knowledge which God would be pleased to recognize. At first this might seem peculiar to us; we might say to ourselves or to others, Why does not God give it out freely to all? The reply of the Scriptures is that God is giving his knowledge freely now to a certain class, and that by and by he will give it to all the families of the earth. This essential knowledge is promised to the faithful in the world, He that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence him, and he will show them his Covenant." "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." Such as thus abide in covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus are indeed taught of God in the School of Christ, and may truly grow in grace and knowledge.

A distinction should be observed in knowing about God, and knowing God himself. It is not sufficient that we should recognize God as the Almighty Creator, for devils also believe that. On the other hand, to be intimately acquainted with God means that we must come into intimate fellowship with him, and this means that we must come unto the Father through the Son, by faith. By thus coming to our heavenly Father by an acquaintance with his Word, and through an appreciation of his glorious work, past, present, and future, we get a view of the lengths, and breadths, and heights and depths of "love divine, all love exceeding." In proportion as we behold the outline of the Divine character, we perceive our own deficiencies and try the more to rid ourselves of them, and at least manifest to the Lord that our hearts are in harmony with the principles of righteousness.

The Sun of Righteousness.
Very appropriately the Scriptures speak of the present as a night-time. They tell us that now "Darkness covers the (civilized) earth, and gross darkness the people (Heathendom)." They assure us that now God's people need the lamp of Divine revelation to guide their footsteps until the day dawns. They assure us, however, that the morning will be ushered in by the great Sun of Righteousness—the Christ, the Messiah, Prophet, Mediator, King of Glory.

Now is the Church excluded from this work of shining upon and enlightening the world and scattering its darkness. The Master gave us to understand that the Church with himself will constitute the Sun of Righteousness, which will then arise with healing in its beams. Thus in the parable of the Wheat and Tares, he pictures the entire work of this Gospel Age and its consummation, which he styles "The harvest—the end of the age." His word respecting the separation of the wheat from the tares is that the wheat shall be gathered into his barn—changed from the earthly to the heavenly nature, and he adds, "Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." The figure of the rising sun scattering the darkness, ignorance and superstition of the world harmonizes with the other picture, which represents the Kingdom of God superseding the kingdom of Satan, and those deluded by Satan, styled in the Scriptures, the kingdoms of this world.

Be Glad and Rejoice.
We may well sympathize with our forefathers, to whom it was not granted to see as clearly as we may now see the glorious fullness of the Divine purpose to eventually enlighten the whole earth, by causing the knowledge of the glory of God to fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep. To us, therefore, is especially applicable the prophetic words, "Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create. For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isaiah lxv, 18, 17). Thus does the Lord picture the new dispensation in graphic language. The new heavens symbolically represent the Church in its new and glorified condition, exercising superior control over the affairs of mankind. Likewise, the new earth symbolically represents the new state or condition of society—the new social order of things which will be introduced as a part of the New Dispensation. Imperfection is now written upon everything with which men are associated, partly because of our fallen condition through heredity, and partly, as the Scriptures declare, through Satan, the god of this world or age, who now works in the hearts of the children of disobedience—prompting to sin and selfishness, pride and ambition, and in every sense of the word tending to alienate the hearts of men from the ways of righteousness. Moreover, the Adversary is largely responsible for the gross errors of misconception of the Divine character, which during the centuries' past have been creeping into the minds of those who were feeling after God, if haply they might find him. All who are of the right spirit, truth seekers, and truth lovers, will be glad to abandon the errors on this subject, which so long have hindered a proper appreciation of the glorious character of our heavenly Father. By teaching us through false doctrines to dread the heavenly Father, the Adversary has implanted in our minds a fear which constitutes a barrier. The Lord speaks of this saying, "Their fear of me is taught by the precepts of men" (Isaiah xxix, 13). Let us then use more diligently than ever before the wonderful Bible which Divine Providence has placed within the reach of all of God's people, that we may know him, whom to know aright will mean to us life eternal.

NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned will apply to the city council of the city of Medford, Oregon, at its next regular meeting, for a license to sell spirituous, vinuous and malt liquors in quantities less than a gallon at their place of business on lots 15 and 16 in block 21 in said city, for a period of six months. RYAN & BROWN.

NOTICE.

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Dated May 25, 1910.

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