

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by
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Paradise Regained.

The Tree of Life
In the Paradise of
God.

Syracuse, N. Y., Aug. 22.—Pastor Russell, of Brooklyn Tabernacle, preached here today to a large and attentive audience. One of the discourses was from the text, "Verily I say unto thee, today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (Luke xiii, 43).

Paradise is another name for the Garden of Eden, the abode of bliss. It was lost through the sin of our first parents, but the gracious promise of our great Creator is that this condition of earthly bliss shall be re-established—not merely in a little corner of the earth, but that the whole earth shall become the Paradise of God. Heaven is God's throne and the earth is his footstool, and he assures us, "I will make the place of my feet glorious"—"In due time." How this will be accomplished is the gospel message.

The Divine promise to Father Abraham, that all the families of the earth should yet be blessed through his Seed, includes the thought of man's full restoration to Divine favor—as before he sinned and before he fell; before Paradise was lost; before man came under the curse of sentence of death. The Jews hoped that Messiah would come and constitute their nation the earthly Kingdom of God and re-establish Paradise with Palestine as its center. They expected that under his wise ministrations, using their nation as his instruments, the Divine Law would extend to all and, by bringing all people into harmony with God, would gradually bring back all to the Paradise state.

The Garden of the Lord.

It was in full harmony with this expectation that the dying thief asked the Lord to remember him when he would come into his Kingdom, the Kingdom which shall dominion world establish righteousness in the earth, and thus convert the world, under Divine favor, into the Paradise of God. Our Lord's answer was that verily, truly, his request would be granted—the thief would yet be with him in Paradise. Paradise has not yet been established, because God's Kingdom has not yet come to earth and it delays until a certain work for the church shall be accomplished.

It is not the Divine intention to make of the nation of Israel God's Kingdom in the highest sense of that word, though it will be actively identified with the heavenly Kingdom as its earthly representative. God is selecting during this Gospel Age a new nation, spiritual Israel from every nation, people, kindred and tongue. At our Lord's first advent and subsequently he gathered from Israel such as were worthy and ready for the Kingdom; and since then he has been taking out from other nations enough to complete the foreordained number of the "elect" Church. These will constitute the Kingdom per se, and it cannot be set up or established in power until this election or selection shall have been completed and the "elect" "changed" or glorified in the spiritual plane by the power of the First Resurrection.

Paradise, or the Garden of the Lord, not only represents that earthly condition which will be restored for the benediction and blessing of the natural man, as the reward of his obedience in the rule of Emmanuel's Kingdom during the Millennial Age, but it also applies in a figurative sense to the glorious and heavenly position which God has in reservation for the Church. Thus we read in the Book of Revelation that the Lord has promised to the overcomers of the Church that "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation ii, 7).

The World's Regeneration.

This is a grandly beautiful and symbolic message and promise assuring us of the happiness and heavenly bliss in eternal life conditions of all who are faithful followers of Christ in the present age—walking in Jesus' footsteps in the "narrow way." The Book of Revelation pictures the history of this Gospel Age down into the Millennial Age and shows us Paradise re-established with the Heavenly City, the glorified Church, as its center or capital. The River of Life is pictured as flowing from under the Throne. On either bank of its crystal waters of Truth and grace grow the trees of Life, after the manner of Eden of old. The future state will all be Paradise. The completeness of blessedness will first be manifested in the Church on the spiritual plane, and, secondly, it will be manifested in the Ancient Worthies on the earthly plane—perfect Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the holy prophets, the earthly representatives of the heavenly Kingdom. Gradually the paradisaical condition shall fill the whole earth. The wilderness shall blossom as the rose and the solitary places shall be glad and streams shall break forth in the deserts, as we read in Isaiah xxxv. The morally lame shall learn to walk in the paths of righteousness. Yea, they shall leap for joy, as they shall have a knowledge of the grace and goodness of God. The world's eyes of understanding shall be opened and their

deaf ears shall be unstopped, that they may hear and see the goodness and mercy, the justice and the love of our God. The willing and obedient shall eat the good of the land, but the evil doers shall be cut off in the Second Death. Gradually the boundaries will be spread abroad until, in the end of the Millennium, they shall include the whole earth. Gradually the numbers enjoying Paradise shall increase until, in the end of the Millennium, the entire race of Adam shall experience this blessed privilege of God's love and mercy through Christ.

St. Paul, like John the Revelator, was caught also to Paradise in vision and saw the glorious things of the future age, which he was not permitted to explain to us, because the due time had not yet come. Neither was John the Revelator permitted to reveal fully the particulars of the Paradise condition. He could merely give us a few symbolical hints or suggestions respecting the glories of Paradise restored.

Redemption Through Christ.

We have already noticed that Paradise was lost by sin through disobedience of the heavenly command. Life and Eden bliss and Divine favor and fellowship were all lost to Adam and to us, his children, under the death sentence. There was no hope for any of us any more than for the brute beast, for while the latter was born to die, man, created with possibilities of life eternal, was sentenced to the loss of all. Indeed, under the demoralizing influences of sin and death we find many of the human family really more degraded than the brute creation and apparently less worthy of Divine favor. But God, rich in mercy, in the great love wherewith he loves us, provided for mankind a recovery from the sentence of sin and death, while he has made no provision for future life for the brute creation.

God's provision for man's recovery from the sentence of death is the story of the "Cross of Christ." Because a man had sinned the redeemer must be a man. Because the penalty was human death, the perfect man must die for the sinner's release from death sentence—to uplift the willing out of sin and death conditions up, up, up to fellowship with God and eternal life. Because the race of Adam inherited naturally his mental, moral and physical defects, therefore none of his posterity was worthy of eternal life. But, in the Divine arrangement, as Adam had involved all of his children and their Paradise home in the wreck of sin and death, so a redemption has been effected through Christ.

The great Work of Messiah will therefore be the restoration of the world to all that was lost in Eden and redeemed at Calvary. The work of restoration, St. Peter tells us, has been spoken of by the "mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began" and will be accomplished by Messiah at his Second Coming (Acts iii, 21). But the Divine Plan changes not. Sin is still objectionable to God, will always be so. And the Divine sentence is that no sinner may have eternal life; hence the offer of Divine Grace is merely that all who will may have Divine assistance, resurrection, restoration, uplifting out of sin and death conditions to perfect conditions. But these things will be accomplished only in those who are willing and obedient. Only such shall eat the good of the land—the fruits of Paradise (Acts iii, 23).

Furthermore it is the Divine arrangement, and a just one, that any good and noble deed of the present life works a measure of character development which will be useful in the future life, enabling the faithful the sooner to mount up in the full perfection of earthly life. Correspondingly every wilful sin, every violation of conscience and principle, works a demerit and impairment of manhood, which, likewise, will have its effect in the future life in the difficulty of rising out of degradation to the heights of Divine perfection and approval and everlasting life. If all mankind could appreciate these facts what an influence it would have in restraining, governing and developing self control and true manhood!

The Divine Program.

Does some one inquire as to why he who Adamed Adam, his Eden home, and all his race, and who proposes a restoration of all—why he has not begun this restitution work during the eighteen hundred years since the sacrifice of himself? The Scriptures answer that another feature of the Divine program is being carried out. The Lord is gathering the "elect" Church from Israel and all the nations to be Messiah's assistants in his Kingdom and the gracious work of uplift—resurrection—restoration. This "elect" Church class first selected is in the Scriptures called "A first-fruits of God unto his creatures" (James i, 18). The world of restored humanity will be the afterfruits.

The Scriptures exhort such as in the present time are blessed with the hearing ear to give heed to the special invitation of the elect. They exhort such as have the eye of faith to aspire to the crown of glory and joint-heirship that is now being tendered to a

very select class. He that hath an ear let him hear. He that hath an eye let him see. So many of us as have been blessed of the Lord with the ear of faith, the eye of faith, let us rejoice therein with the blessed opportunity. Let us seek indeed to make our calling and election sure to this heavenly estate of glory, honor and immortality and joint-heirship with our Lord, the King of kings and Lord of lords!

Christ's Atonement.

Both the thieves crucified with our Lord lost their right to the original Eden or Paradise of God through father Adam's disobedience, as did we all. Both of those thieves were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity, in sin did their mothers conceive them," as with us all. Both of those thieves were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as were we all; for "Christ Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man." He is the propitiation for our sins (the Church's sins), and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Thus, as we have seen, the Redeemer has made provision for both of those thieves, as well as for all of us—all of Adam's race—to be recovered from the sin and death conditions of the fall and to be restored to Paradise. The Church now called during this Gospel Age may reach the spiritual Paradise or highest condition of holiness and happiness. The two thieves and the remainder of mankind will have their opportunity during the Millennium. Their opportunity will be for a return to earthly life and perfection and happiness and an earthly Eden—world wide. How much grander a work will thus result from our Lord's death than we had previously supposed!

Let none suppose, however, that those two thieves will enter Paradise on the same footing. While both were guilty of robbery, they evidently were dissimilar in the condition of their hearts. The one was hardened, as evidenced by the fact that he could speak thus rashly to the Redeemer, whose face bespoke gentleness, purity and innocence of crime. Such cruelty implied a deep degradation of mind—implied that he was hardened. And yet we must remember that others of the multitude standing by used similarly cruel language. And we must remember that there are many thieves who are not caught and many, perhaps, as usually wrong, as evilly intentioned, who, for fear of the consequences, never committed the wrongs. We can even suppose that some of the scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of Divinity of those days were in God's sight much worse than the impenitent thief—murderers at heart and in deed. Yet of the latter St. Peter declares, "I won, brethren, that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers," when you crucified the Lord of glory.

An Earthly Paradise.

Ignorance and superstition and inherited depravity all bore down upon the impenitent thief to a degree which we are not capable of properly estimating. The Lord will judge him—both thieves—all mankind. The penitent thief will unquestionably have a two-fold blessing. First he will be blessed because of his penitent attitude of mind; secondly, because of his faithfulness in expressing that penitence and mercy to our Lord in his distress. Our Lord declared that even a cup of cold water given to the least of his disciples will have its reward. Surely it will be in harmony, then, that the penitent thief will have a reward for his defense of the Master.

That reward will consist, first of all, in the blessing to his own heart through the action thereof of the merciful sentiment. A reward will come to him in proportion to the extent of the occasion and the greatness of the one whom he loved. If the one who favors a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward and the one who favors a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, surely the one who favored the Redeemer would receive a special reward, such as the Redeemer might be expected to grant.

The penitent thief manifested not only sympathy but honesty and it is entirely in keeping with the general teachings of our Lord's Word that the honest-hearted and the merciful have special blessings. These blessings cannot reach them in the grave and it is not always that they reach them in the present life. Virtue is not always its own reward, our Lord declares the Truth on the subject, assuring us that such shall be "recompensed in the resurrection of the just." That is to say, when the just, the justified, the Church, shall be resurrected in the First Resurrection and when then the heavenly Kingdom shall be established amongst men and the general awakening of the world from the sleep of death shall gradually follow—then every good and every evil word, every good and every evil act, will be recompensed—in Paradise. Let us be glad and rejoice that the Divine arrangement is an earthly Paradise, possible to every member of the race, and a heavenly Paradise, possible to every member of the spirit-begotten Church, and that the alternative of Paradise is not eternal torment, but everlasting destruction—the Second Death.

Just Waiting.

An old gentleman, rather portly and clad in a somewhat youthful suit of light gray tannet, sat on a bench in the park.

"What's the matter, sonny?" he asked a small urchin who lay on the grass just across the walk and stared intently. "Why don't you go and play?"

"Don't wanter," the boy replied.

"But it is not natural," the old gentleman insisted, "for a boy to be so quiet. Why don't you run about?"

"Oh, I'm just waitin'," the little fellow answered, "I'm just waitin' till you get up. A man painted that bench about fifteen minutes ago."—Pittsburg News.

HE JUMPS ONTO THE HOUSE CAT

Prof. Fisher of Agricultural Department Points Out That They Are Menace to Humanity.

Washington, Aug. 28.—"Sleek highwayman," "marauder," and "alleged mouse killer" are just a few of the low-down, mean, opprobrious epithets which a learned scientific expert is now calling that pet of childhood and solace of the spinster—the cat.

Tabby comes in for an awful muck-raking in the new year book of the department of agriculture. Prof. A. K. Fisher of the biological survey is the man who destroys those early idols as to the lovely character of the cat. He says the animal is a degenerate—a thief—a scoundrel—and ought not to be tolerated in a respectable household—or at least not allowed the same liberty as at present.

"It is safe to say that this marauder (the professor is referring to the cat when he uses this mean word) which enjoys all the comforts and protection of a home, destroys in the aggregate more wild birds and young poultry than all the native natural enemies combined. A cat has been known to kill a whole brood of chickens in a day, a feat unequalled by any predaceous animal, with the possible exception of the hawk. Many an innocent hawk, skunk, owl and weasel has been shot for the deeds of that sleek highwayman, the house cat.

"A well known naturalist estimates that in the New England states alone 1,500,000 birds are destroyed annually by cats.

"The principal reasons given for keeping cats are their attractiveness as house pets, their usefulness as companions for children and their alleged value as rat and mouse killers.

"Alleged mouse killers"—think of that insinuation! But the professor does more than just sneer at Tabby's rodent killing proclivities. He says further:

"It is safe to say that few persons during a normal lifetime run across more than half a dozen cats that habitually attack rats. It has been the common experience of the writer to find premises that were well supplied with cats over run with rats and mice. In a certain ranch house in the west he trapped in his bedroom 12 mice in a week, although eight cats had access to the place.

"Lovers of the cat should be content with one, or at the most two, of these pets, and should see to it that outcasts do not run at large on their premises. Now that cats are known to carry in their fur the germs not only of ringworm but also of such dreaded diseases as tuberculosis, diphtheria, scarlet fever and smallpox the presence in the household of Tabby is not without its dangers."

Isn't that a picture of malignant pestiferousness? And then, too, think of these things Professor Fisher says about the cat, while reading the pleasant words, the little congratulations, the pats of encouragement and the appreciative praise he gives to that fragrant animal, the skunk. Here's what the professor thinks about that smelly beast:

"The skunk is another 'chicken thief' which renders important service by destroying immense numbers of mice, grubs, grasshoppers and other noxious forms. Although it prefers this kind of food, like the opossum it will eat almost any animal matter and also at times certain wild fruits and berries. It is said to be fond of eggs and young chickens; but the writer has known a mother skunk to make her nest and rear her young in the inner walls of a chicken yard and neither egg nor fowl was molested."

Probable if "Uncle Tama Jim" Wilson, who is secretary of agriculture, hadn't been watching closely, Professor Fisher would have added to this eulogy of the skunk the recommendation that that animal be adopted as a household pet instead of the disgraced cat. A skunk as a household pet, however, would probably not be without its dangers.

Disagreeable at Home.

Lots of men and women who are agreeable with others get "cranky" at home. It's not disposition, it's the liver. If you find in yourself that you feel cross around the house little things worry you, just buy a bottle of Ballard's Herbine and put your liver in shape. You and everybody around you will feel better for it. Price 50c per bottle. Sold by all druggists.

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