

PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by CHARLES T. RUSSELL, Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle

Every Idle Word

Text, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matthew 25, 36, 37).

Sunday, Sept. 19.—Some time soon we must consider for the benefit of fellow-Christians what the Bible has to say respecting the Day of Judgment. For the present we suffice ourselves with the general explanation that this term Day of Judgment has been seriously misconstrued by theologians and by the public. It has been used out of harmony with the Scriptural usage. It has been used out of harmony with reasonable, logical deductions. The term Day of Judgment is generally understood to mean Day of Sentence or Day of Doom. In fact, Doomsday is frequently used as a synonym without the slightest warrant. The term Day of Judgment signifies the Day of trial or testing; as in our text we read that men shall give an account in the Day of Judgment for every idle word. The proper thought on the subject of judgment from the Bible standpoint is this: God created our first parents innocent, perfect, and placed them on trial. Their Day of Judgment was in Eden. How long it would have lasted had they remained faithful to God we are not informed, but as soon as they had disobeyed the Divine command, their day of trial or judgment was ended, and the sentence, "Dying thou shalt die," began to be inflicted. The judgment or trial of Adam was over, and since all of his posterity share his imperfections and are equally unworthy of life on that account, therefore the sentence of sin, "Dying thou shalt die," rests upon every member of the race, just as though each individual had been on trial in Eden and had lost in the trial with father Adam. This matter St. Paul clearly enunciates, saying, "By one man's disobedience, sin entered into the world and death as the result of sin. Thus death passed upon all men, because all are sinners" (Romans 5, 12).

This being true, how comes it that there is any mention made in the Scriptures of another judgment day. If all mankind already are judged unworthy of eternal life and worthy of death everlasting, why should there be any further judgment? The Bible answer to the question is that there would have been no reference to a future judgment day had it not been that God had provided a Redeemer, Christ Jesus, by whose merit the first penalty against our race through Adam will eventually be abrogated, set aside. In consequence of the setting aside of the first sentence of death a second trial or judgment will be opened to every member of the race. The first trial or judgment was of one man (Adam) for all of his race. A second trial or judgment, secured by the Redeemer, will treat Adam and all of his race individually; granting them each an individual or personal trial, hence unlike the first trial in Eden, which was of one man and for the race. This second trial has not yet been provided for our race, except in the sense that it has been prepared for and promised—"God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." That day will be the Millennial day—a thousand years in length. It will be the world's trial day or time of individual testing.

Whoever of the world comes to a knowledge of the fact that God has provided such a future trial, such a future opportunity of obtaining eternal life, is on notice at once that every intelligent act of his in the present life will have a bearing upon his prospect for eternal life in the future. If now he uses wisely the opportunities of the present life he may upbuild for himself a measure of character, self-control, etc., which will prepare him for a more honorable place during the Millennial Kingdom and make his progress there the more rapid and the more easy. On the contrary, by degrading himself in the present life he may undermine his character and, during the Millennial Day of Judgment (trial) find himself so much lower in the human scale and have so much farther to advance out of sin and death conditions into the condition of perfection and everlasting life.

The Church has her judgment day in the present life—during this Gospel Age. All consecrated believers, begotten of the holy Spirit, are now on trial for everlasting life or for everlasting death as "new creatures in Christ Jesus." If such do not comply with the conditions of their consecration, but draw back to sin, their trial will be in one sense useless and the sentence of utter destruction will rest upon them—"the Second Death."

It's Words—Perilous Words. The context shows that our Lord in our text addressed, not his disciples, but the worldly, the Pharisees. Doubtless the same principle applies to the Church. Every idle or perilous word of ours has its weight, has its influence with ourselves and with others. Those who are rightly informed respecting the Lord's will in such matters, the Lord's consecrated people, have a great responsibility—a responsibility—what affect their words and influence have upon others. Our words, whether written or spoken, exercise an influence upon the minds and thoughts of others. Frequently they go from one to another and thus, if pernicious, evil is spread far and near and the word once uttered cannot be

recalled. Some one has wisely said that Error can get around the world while Truth is getting its boots on. Oh, the power of a slanderous word! Oh, the power of an insinuation! Yes, even of a shrug of the shoulder! Who does not know it? Who is unaware of the fact that this is the practice of the world daily, and alas, the practice also of many of God's people—professing Christians! The bitter word of sarcasm or insinuation is shot out often unthinkingly, but the terrible poison goes from heart to heart and fresh roots of bitterness are scattered abroad, which a lifetime of holy living cannot fully counteract.

On the contrary, what a power the tongue has for good, using the word tongue here in its broad sense, representing not only words spoken, but the words written and printed. As an illustration: What speaker or writer has ever done more to help poor humanity than the Prophet David in the inspired Psalms which he wrote? Truly, as Solomon has said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25, 11). As for the Church, the Lord has indeed agreed that he will not judge the Church according to their words and their deeds entirely, but according to their spirit, their intention, their will, their energy, their zeal for him and his Truth. Nevertheless, he assures the Church that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and that they may thus judge or test themselves. If their hearts are right—full of love for God, for the brethren, for mankind, for their enemies, they will speak accordingly, manifesting their love and kindness in words as well as in deeds. The good heart out of its good treasure will shower blessings—fruits and flowers of refreshment and kindness, while the evil heart will send forth bitter words, poisoned arrows, injurious to all with whom they come in contact.

Whoever, therefore, finds that he is continually stirring up strife and wounding his friends should promptly make an examination of his heart to ascertain the trouble there. He should not be content to say, "I meant no harm." The heart that is not full of goodness, kindness, generosity, love, will likely not control the tongue properly. We must reach the place where not only we do not will to do harm to our neighbors, but where we sincerely wish to do them good. Then that good heart, out of its treasure of goodness, will speak words of kindness, of love.

Men Shall Give an Account. But now, considering the words of our text as applicable to the Millennium, how will the world render its account in the future respecting the words of the present life? Not surely in line with the teachings of the dark ages that, during a twenty-four-hour day, the whole world could be ranged in line and each individual remember each pernicious word and evil act and give an account of the same to the great Judge? Quite different will the reality be. The judgment day will be the thousand year period of the Millennium and the account of every evil act, of every sinful deed, and of every pernicious word will be recorded in the individual's own character, just as a towel bears the mark of every unclean wash dried upon it. In other words, the wrongdoer not only injures others, but specially injures and marks himself by the wrong he has practiced in evil speaking and evil-doing and the more deeply has he marked his character accordingly. It is in line with this that the Scriptures assure us that in the resurrection time many will come forth to shame and lasting contempt. It is a time in which characters will be shown up. How terribly ashamed some will be of their showings! Some who now appear to be honorable indeed, some who now rank fairly high amongst men, will then be seen in true colors. Their shame and contempt in which they will be held by mankind in general will be a part of their punishment for their wrong course. The shame will last until gradually they will be able to demonstrate a more noble character. Their contempt will continue until, under the blessed, uplifting influences of the Millennial Kingdom, they will have attained the way of the Lord more perfectly.

By Thy Words Justified. We are not to think that this signifies that every man will be justified from the Adamic death condemnation by any words that he could utter. Nor are we to think of the expression, "By thy words thou shalt be justified," that any man could come under a second condemnation until first freed through Christ from the condemnation of original sin. Nothing but the merit of Christ's sacrifice can justify any. Nothing but the blood of Christ can justify those who come to God by faith, in this Age, or those who will secure him of their loyalty for righteousness by works, in the next Age. We are not to understand our Lord as here contradicting the general testimony of the Scriptures. The lesson is in harmony with the Scriptural declaration, "Blessed is the man who is not condemned by that which he alloweth." That is to say, The ungenerous, the unkind, are very

apt to blame others strongly for misdemeanors of which they themselves are guilty. The man whose words respecting others do not condemn himself is to be congratulated as a happy man indeed. The person whose criticism of others is so kindly, so generous, so merciful as to not involve a condemnation of his own course is certainly an exceptional man or woman. We call to remembrance our Lord's words, "With whatsoever measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again," and, interpreting our text in harmony with this, if our words are generous and kind, loving and benevolent we shall receive similarly kind treatment of the Lord. If our language respecting others be harsh, cynical, critical, unkind, we may expect reproaches from the Lord. Why? Because all mankind are by nature fallen, imperfect, depraved; and the person who sees the faults of others and fails to see his own, needs the corrective chastisements of the Lord to show him his true condition reflected in his course of conduct and language toward and respecting others; he indicates that he himself needs to be taught some very important lessons without which he will not be prepared to make progress toward the Divine standards of character.

On the contrary, the person who is kind, gentle, forgiving, forbearing, sympathetic, disposed to make allowances for others shows that he has learned an important lesson already and that, to a considerable extent, his heart is right. Whatever there is wrong with such a generous soul is unintentionally wrong, a wrong which is entrenched in his flesh, but with which his heart is not in accord. By his kindly words respecting others he marks himself, indicates his character as of the kind which God can approve; as one of the class who at least love their neighbor as themselves and thus imply also that they love God, because, as the Apostle points out, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Contrariwise he who loves his neighbor speaks generously of him, is merciful toward him, and compassionate, undoubtedly would greatly respect and love the Divine character in its perfection of Justice, Wisdom and Love.

Blessed Are the Merciful. This brings us to another Scripture of similar tenor: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." It is true that God gave to natural Israel a code of laws which defined the course of life for them, saying, "Thou shalt not do this and that. Yet that Law was intended in great measure to show to Israel and to the world the impossibility of an imperfect man or woman keeping perfectly the Divine requirements. When the Lord would state his Law from the other standpoint—justly and not negatively, he sums the matter up in few words, "Thou shalt love the Lord supremely and thy neighbor as thyself. He who is merciful is in the condition to be blessed of the Lord, because he more than others approximates the standard of the Divine Law—Love; for mercy is the expression of love.

We see, then, that the Divine promise that he who is merciful to his neighbor will receive the more mercy from the Lord is not a mere *ipse dixit*, nor a mere rewarding of such a proper course. Rather it is in harmony with the principles and essence of the divine government, because the more generous and loving the heart, the nearer to the perfect condition. If this principle could be rightly seen by Christian people it would work an almost instantaneous revolution in the hearts and conduct of all who desire Divine approval and favor. Instead of burning one another at the stake; instead of putting on thumb screws; instead of condemning one another to eternal torment, Christians would be seeking to bless one another, to think and feel kindly respecting one another and disposed to pray God's blessing upon those who despitefully use them and persecute them. Instead of slander and misrepresentation and envious insinuations, the spirit of love and kindness and mercy and godlikeness would more and more prevail amongst those who have named the name of Christ and have professedly enlisted under his banner and covenanted to walk in his footsteps.

Nor would the blessing stop with the Church. The world, seeing such an example of love and kindness, would be ready to take knowledge of the followers of Jesus, as they did in the days of the apostles, saying, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" Then our Lord's words would have a practical illustration, "A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you"—the extent of laying down our lives for each other. As the Apostle declares, "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren."

It has seemed at times as though some of those who profess relationship to Christ as members of his Church do even more of petty evil-speaking and slandering and busy-bodily than do the worldly who make no profession whatever. According to the standards set forth in our text the worldly, if they have mercy—the quality of mercy in their hearts—will evidently be more pleasing to God than those who have made much profession and neglected the Master's commands and failed to cultivate his spirit of love and mercy, in word and deed.

Let us all remember our text and apply it. "By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned." As we think of the fact that these sermons reach the eyes of about seven millions of readers weekly, we feel the weight of our responsibility. It is our desire that they be just such as the Lord can approve, and such as will be helpful to hearers and readers.

OREGON LENDS AID TO LAND CONGRESS

GOV. BENSON SEES IN COMING MEETING VAST ACQUIRING BENEFITS TO WEST—IS ON ADVISORY BOARD—NO OBJECT WORTHIER THAN SPREADING DATA TO INFORM HOMESEEKERS

A San Francisco special to the Los Angeles Express says: Governor Frank W. Benson, of Oregon, heartily indorsing the ideas back of the National Farm Land Congress, to be held in Chicago in November, has taken a position as a member of the Honorable Advisory Committee of the Congress, and means to interest himself in his State's representation at the meeting.

Governor Benson is one of the many Western governors in the coming Congress, realizing, with the other executives, the immense value to the West of such a Congress, gaining, as it will, the widest possible publicity for the agricultural possibilities and conditions of the West. Oregon will be heavily represented at the National Farm Land Congress. In approving the Congress, Governor Benson said:

Vast Acres Available.
"There are hundreds of thousands of acres of land in Oregon, just waiting for men who want to make fortunes from their cultivation. The proposed National Farm Land Congress thus offers our state a wonderful opportunity for telling the whole world what we have. I understand the object to be the collection and publication of data as to available farm land and farming conditions generally, in the various sections of the United States suitable for farming purposes. No object could be worthier or more valuable to the west.

For instance we have in Oregon hundreds of thousands of acres that can be purchased at a nominal figure. You can buy land near Salem for \$200 an acre, and in a few years make it worth five times that sum by planting it in orchards. But better than this, the homeseeker can buy land at as low a figure as \$30. The state has reclamation projects on foot that will make this land as valuable and productive as any in the country, and I cannot think of the man whose ambition could be higher than to raise the famous Oregon apples which this land will produce.

Fortunes in Apple Orchards.
Once clear this land and put it into orchards and you have a fortune. This has been the history of the famous Hood River and Rogue River apple districts. Lands bought at low rates are worth thousands of dollars today. They are producing fabulous returns. But there are just as good apple-growing sections awaiting development. I know of one apple orchard, in the heart of the Willamette country, Yamhill county, Oregon, that sold a week ago for \$300,000, and a few years ago this beautiful orchard, the largest in

the world, was just the kind of land the National Farm Land Congress proposes to place before the homeseeker.

I shall help this congress in every way that I can, because for one thing, I realize that Oregon has not had the publicity its resources justify, and because the congress offers a fine opportunity for Oregonians to tell the homeseeker what he can do in Oregon. We want Oregon represented at the National Farm Land Congress and will be sure to furnish complete information about Oregon lands to those watching the Congress for news of a real opportunity to win a fortune from the soil.

Father—And so your teacher is dead. Sonny—What's the good of that while the school is still there?—Meggendorfer Blatter.

MOB AFTER FARMER FOR MISTREATING CHILDREN

[UNITED PRESS LEASED WIRE.]
San Jose, Cal., Sept. 25.—The police today are searching for Jesse Miller, a middle-aged farmer of Sunnyvale, following a story of ill-treatment told by little 8-year-old Mary Enright and Ruth Meany, aged nine years.

Angered at the reports, a mob of citizens last night stormed Miller's home and ordered him to come out and face the crowd. When no answer was received, his house was riddled with bullets. A search of the premises showed that Miller had left his home before the arrival of the mob. Miller, who is fairly well off, has always been prominent in Sunnyvale's religious circles.

For the past two weeks reports have been current about Miller's alleged mistreatment of children, and recently a delegation of fathers waited upon the man. He left town the following day, but yesterday he returned, and as soon as his presence was made known the citizens became enraged.

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The proposition is very simple: If you are behind on your subscription simply pay up to SEPT. 30 at the regular rate, then pay \$3.00 for one year in advance. You do not have to wait until SEPT. 30 before paying, drop into the office any time you are in the city and pay up to SEPT. 30 and then the year in advance.

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