

GREAT WHITE THRONE AND ITS BLESSINGS

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PASTOR RUSSELL

London, Eng., Nov. 6.—Pastor Russell of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, New York, preached here today. Royal Albert Hall held a vast audience of deeply interested hearers. The speaker chose his text from Revelation 21:1:—

"I saw a great White Throne, and him that sat on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." He said:

Sin made moral cowards of our race. From early infancy fear and apprehension, especially in respect to things future, have been impressed upon us. We realize our imperfection, and that our God is perfect, and that perfection is the only standard which he could approve, and that some kind of punishment for sin must be expected. The adversary, taking advantage of our forethought, misrepresented the Almighty and used our fears to attenuate us from him and to wrest and distort his message to us in the Bible. St. Paul assures us that this is Satan's special procedure; that he puts light for darkness and darkness for light. Thus it comes that our text, which is really one of the most beautiful and comforting in the whole Bible when rightly understood, has to many become a lash in the hands of their fears.

It is needless to say that our text is one of the symbolisms of a Book filled with symbols. God's people, guided by his holy Spirit, in due time will appreciate these symbols. For many of them the due time is already here. The Throne is Messiah's. It represents his Mediatorial Dominion of earth for a thousand years. Its whiteness symbolizes the purity, the justice, of his Kingdom of righteousness under the whole heavens. The heavens and earth which will flee away from the presence of the great Emmanuel will not be the heavens of God's Throne, nor the earth which he has given to the children of men. The heavens and earth which will flee away, and for which no place will be found, are, of course, the symbolical ones. In Bible symbology the earth represents established civilization; the sea represents the restless, dissatisfied masses of humanity. The mountains symbolize human governments, kingdoms, which constitute the backbone of present spiritual influences—Ecclesiasticalism, Churchianity. Thus interpreted our text declares that when Messiah shall assume control of the world; when he shall sit upon his Throne; when he shall exercise rulership amongst men, the result will be that the social system of today, as well as the present day ecclesiasticalism, will flee away, will pass out of existence—no place will be found for them.

Satan Now the Prince.

Some men may be inclined to ask, Has not Christ been the great Ruler of the world for these past nineteen centuries? And whatever may be said of the four thousand years before the coming of Christ will it not be claimed that he has been reigning ever since his ascension to the right hand of the Father? We answer that if this be true; if the Redeemer of men has been reigning as the King of earth for these nineteen centuries, where should be something in the Bible to so teach. But we find nothing. On the contrary, we hearken to the Master's own words, telling us that Satan is the Prince of this age (John xiv, 30). We hearken to him again telling us, "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii, 36). Again he says, "I will come again and receive you unto myself" (John xiv, 23). Again he tells us that he went into a far country to receive the title to his Kingdom, then to return to take possession of it (Matthew xxi, 33; xiv, 14), and that at his second coming he will be the great King of glory. He tells us the same thing in Matthew xxv, 31. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."

On the other hand, as we scan the pages of history during the past eighteen centuries, we are convinced that Messiah has not been the King of the world. To think of him as such, with the omnipotent power which we accord to him, would be to charge him with responsibility for bloody and atrocious persecutions and wars and famines and pestilences. Surely no right-minded person, after mature consideration, can rationally accept the theory that the glorious Messiah's reign of righteousness for the blessing of the whole earth, the uplifting of every creature, and the bringing of all possible into accord with God—none of us could think that that reign of the great Mediator between God and men is in the past. We must agree with our text that it is in the future, and that, when established, its effect upon the institutions of the present—political, social, financial, religious—will be such that they will flee away; no place ever more will be found for them. Ah! from this standpoint there is hope; but from no other standpoint. We are living today at the very climax of civilization. Yet today we behold more clearly than ever before that the deeply-ingrained selfishness

of humanity is a blight upon all the blessings and conveniences and advantages of our day.

The Curse of Selfishness.

I need not do more than remind you that selfishness is to be found in every one of us, and that a semblance of righteousness is insisted upon by us all and adhered to, and violators of it are styled criminals. Nevertheless it seems impossible to legislate equity, justice. The keen intellects of men find opportunities for circumventing the laws and for committing theft and murder and sin in the face of laws and without danger of being punished.

Let us illustrate this: We have heard of the famines of India and how the British Government has spent millions of "pounds sterling" for irrigation purposes to compensate for irregularities in the rain-fall. Undoubtedly the famines are to some extent due to water scarcity. Nevertheless, one of the ablest of our engineers informs the world that there has not been in fifty years such a scarcity as should have created the famines. The famines of India, which have cost the lives of millions, are to be accredited to greed—selfishness which has flourished under the shadow of the law. Wealthy milling concerns purchase the rice from the natives and grind it into flour. By agreement between themselves they do not compete, but press the market price of rice lower and lower until the poor native, unable to make a profit, declines to plant, care for and harvest the crop. As a result there is famine. The poor natives suffer; but the managers of the milling properties pay large dividends of from fifty to one hundred and fifty per cent. on invested capital to the wealthy owning them.

As an illustration of the exorbitant profits I will relate a case: Two young men whose accumulated savings amounted to thirty thousand rupees (about two thousand pounds, or ten thousand dollars) invested it in rice-milling. Their profits for the first year were eighty thousand rupees—about five thousand pounds, or twenty-five thousand dollars. They were not in the combine to depress the price of rice, but they profited by what the combine accomplished. These inequities of our present social order are beyond the reach and correction of the comparatively few men of ability not directly or indirectly interested in them.

The White Throne Judgment.

Neither Jehovah nor his great Representative, Messiah, can in any sense or degree be a party to injustice or inequity. The fact that injustice has been permitted, and that inequity has been the rule for centuries, is to be accounted for by the other fact that during all this period the world has been under the reign of sin and death, and not under the reign of righteousness and life; it has been under the reign of Satan, "the Prince of this world" and of the darkness of selfishness and evil—all of which his name represents—and not under the dominion of Messiah, the Representative of Jehovah, and his righteousness; not under the King of glory, the anti-typical David and Solomon, the anti-typical Aaron and Melchisedec. The New Dispensation which Messiah's Kingdom will usher in is pictured in our text. It will be the dominion that will be world-wide—pure, holy, righteous, just, truthful, God-like—a great White Throne. No wonder we read that the symbolical heavens and earth, representing the old order of things—social, ecclesiastical—will all vanish away.

But let no one think for a moment that ecclesiastical princes, financial princes and political princes will voluntarily acknowledge that the hour has come for a full surrender to Messiah and to all the principles of his absolute righteousness. On the contrary, these privileged members of our race will more and more be drawn together for mutual protection—for the preservation of the special privileges which have come into their possession. Even now we see the prophecy of the Second Psalm fulfilling. We are in the very time when the Lord, through the Prophet David, calls the great ones of the earth to recognize the true situation of our wonderful day—that it means that the Day of Messiah has arrived, and that he should be recognized and his principles of righteousness obeyed.

The call is recognized, Salute the Son, O ye kings of the earth, while ye are in the way with him, before his anger be kindled and ye perish by the way (Psalm ii, 10-12). But no, the prophecy declares that we are in the day when the people, the masses, will have foolish imaginations—when they will think that by their own strength they can inaugurate a reign of righteousness along the lines of Socialism or by anarchy. The people must learn that their help is in the Lord and not in their own frail arm. The people must see the force of the statement, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Messiah" (verse 12). The Lord is about to establish the great White Throne of absolute justice in the world.

On the other hand, the money kings and earthly rulers and ecclesiastical princes are taking counsel together today for the preservation of the present inequities of the world, by which they are profiting. The Lord declares that in this they are banding themselves against him and against the newly-appointed King, Messiah. For over a century human liberty has been making progress, in spite of every endeavor to restrain it. The potentates of earth perceive the rising tide of human intelligence and demands for equal rights. They perceive that unless something be done to counteract this general movement, the special privileges of the privileged classes will disappear. They are even now

taking counsel together how the restraints, which the people are putting upon them, may be broken and a reign of anarchy—political, financial and religious—be re-inaugurated; reign such as prevailed centuries ago, but now upon a higher plane, controlled by brighter wits, holding under restraint more intelligent masses.

"Be Instructed, Ye Judges!"

Would that the cultured and influential princes of earth could take the proper view of the situation and realize the fallacy of their counsels, the impossibility of averting the great changes which are upon us by reason of the time having come for Messiah to take unto himself his great power and reign! Hearken to the Lord's words through the Prophet, "Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings! Be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son" (Psa. 103-12). Could the wits of earth realize the situation and fully submit themselves to the Divine requirements of absolute justice and truth, what a blessing it would be to the world! If these princes would turn their attention from the grasping of power and money to the enlightenment and uplifting of the people they would become ministers, servants, of the New Dispensation, which would be ushered in with rejoicing. But the Lord informs us that this will not be the case and that, as a result, Messiah's Kingdom will be ushered in by "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" (Daniel xii, 1). The Psalmist tells us the same—God will have in derision the puny efforts of the worldly-wise and great to re-establish anarchy. He will speak to them in his wrath the lesson which they refuse to hear by loving exhortation. The new King and his Empire will be established in his Empire, and the declaration is that amidst such Divine displeasure he shall "break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm ii, 4-9; Revelation ii, 27).

Small and Great to Be Judged.

God is no respecter of persons. Hence, before his Judgment Throne punishments will be meted out to the little, as well as to the great, when found to be violators of the principles of justice. Would that I could impress this upon many of the lower classes who are crying out against the injustices in high places while practicing similar injustices themselves. Let it be remembered also that the great White Throne speaks blessings, Divine favor and uplifting to all who love righteousness and hate iniquity—the little and the great.

If in the past a certain retributive justice has seemed to proceed along national lines, blessing the nations which take the more righteous course, and frowning upon those which take the more evil course, this will no longer be the case in the not distant future. The testing imposed by Messiah's Kingdom will be along individual lines. He that eats the sour grape of sin will find his teeth on edge, and his alone. "Justice will be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet," and all the refugees of lies, by which mankind in high places have sought to fool themselves and others, will be swept away. The hidden things of darkness will be brought to light and the glorious things of light will be everywhere recognized. Ultimately "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" to the enthroned Messiah.

"The Books Will Be Opened."

The Master said, "My Word shall judge you in the last day." Happy has it been for the comparatively few who have heard the Master's Word in this present life, and have judged themselves thereby, and submitted themselves to his righteous precepts! These blessed ones will share with Messiah the glories of his Spiritual Empire, invisible to men. But during the Thousand-Year Judgment Day of the world (1 Peter iii, 7, 8) the same words—"wonderful words of life" to those who will obey, and words of death to those who will refuse obedience—will be the standards of justice for all mankind. The books then to be opened to all will include, not only the words of the Master and of the Apostles of the New Testament, but also the Divine message through the Prophets of old. Then all shall see the oneness and harmony of the Divine message of righteousness. According to those standards each who would have eternal life must conform his living and his thinking. The approved, at the end of Messiah's reign, will be delivered over to the Father perfect as human beings. The disapproved will be destroyed in the Second Death—without hope (1 Peter ii, 12; Jude 12; Acts iii, 23).

Another book of life will be opened—another besides the one that is now open, which is styled the Lamb's Book of Life, and in which is written the names of his faithful followers of the present time—"members of his Body," "the Royal Priesthood," "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife." The new book of life will be for those who will be on trial during Messiah's reign. By its close it will include all of Adam's race found worthy of eternal life.

The judgment of the Church in the present time is not according to works, the perfection of which, under present conditions, would be impossible. Hence the Church's judgment is according to faith and the obedience of faith possible. But the world's judgment will be according to works, for the knowledge then will be so great that faith will no longer be at a premium. The great Mediator will accept of imperfect works according to the ability of the people; but, as they rise out of degradation, more and more will be required of them until in the end they will be perfected and absolute perfection of works will be required.

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