

Pastor Russell's Sermon

THE HARVEST RIPE FOR GARNERING

Fruitage of This Age Soon to Be Harvested.

NOT TO CONVERT THE HEATHEN

Pastor Russell's Visit to Heathen Lands Does Not Imply His Hope For the Conversion of the Heathen as the Means For Inaugurating Messiah's Kingdom, but the Reverse—The Kingdom Must Be Established Before Every Knee Will Bow—Heathens Have More Than Doubled in Last Century.



Brooklyn, Dec. 3d.—The public was not made aware of Pastor Russell's presence in our city today. No advertisements were given forth because the Academy of Music was not obtainable, and the Tabernacle would not accommodate the crowds. As it was, however, the Tabernacle was crowded. His text was, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—Jeremiah viii. 20.

The Pastor seemed specially to enjoy the semi-privacy of this meeting with the Tabernacle congregation. As is generally known he is about to start on a tour of the world in company with a Committee of six gentlemen of affairs of which he is the chosen Chairman. The Committee was appointed some months ago by the International Bible Students Association to visit heathen lands, to investigate conditions there and to report to the Association and to the public their findings along the following lines:—

The Committee's Instructions.

- (1) Are the Foreign Missions being conducted along Christian business lines?
- (2) To what extent are the methods used successful in reaching the heathen peoples and in bringing them to Christianity?
- (3) What are the teachings, what the inducements to accept Christianity and how enduring are the results?
- (4) What is the attitude of heathendom to the missionaries and toward Christianity and what are the prospects for Foreign Missions becoming self-sustaining?
- (5) What, if any, changes could be made in teaching or in financial administration to make the foreign missionary work more successful in the future?
- (6) What hope is there for the conversion of the world in this generation as proposed by the Laymen's Missionary Movement with its thirty-million-dollar endowment?
- (7) To what extent do the monies donated benefit the heathen and could any improvement along this line be suggested?

The personnel of this Committee is interesting. They are all deeply interested in Christian work, both at home and abroad. They are Christian men of the highest type, and have long been contributors to the spread of the Gospel. They are as follows: Pastor Russell, President; Prof. F. H. Robison, Secretary; Gen. W. P. Hall, U. S. A.; Mr. J. T. D. Pyles, Washington, D. C.; Merchant; Mr. E. W. V. Kuehn, Merchant, Toledo, Ohio; Dr. L. W. Jones, Chicago, Illinois, and Mr. R. B. Maxwell, Merchant, Mansfield, Ohio. The report of this committee will be awaited with great interest by many.

Pastor Russell will visit classes of Bible Students en route and will address the public next Sunday in Los Angeles, California. Arrangements are perfected whereby we will be in touch with him throughout his journey. His addresses will be reported from Japan, China, Manila, Travancore, Madras, Calcutta, Cairo and Corinth.

Discussing his text the Pastor declared that as there was a harvest time, a reaping time, in the end of the Jewish Age, so also there is to be a harvesting in the end of this Gospel Age. The fruitage of this Age will be gathered into the heavenly "garner," by the glorious change of the First Resurrection. The Lord's words were, "The harvest is the end of the Age." By mistranslation His words were rendered, "The harvest is the end of the world," and thus many have been misled into a fear that the second coming of Jesus will mean the end of all things, for all except the salutary few.

Rather we should understand that as the Jewish Age ended with a harvest, and its ripe fruitage was gathered into the "garner," so the garnering of the Church, in the close of this Age, will mean the inauguration of the New Dispensation of Messiah's Kingdom—a New Age of blessing to the world in general—to all the families of the earth. The glorified Church, in association with her Lord and Redeemer, will reign for a thousand years, as kings and priests unto God and unto Christ, for the world's uplifting out of sin and death conditions.

Only the Church Harvested.

The Pastor reminded his hearers that he believes the Bible to teach that we are now in the Harvest time of this

Age. Consequently none should misunderstand the visit to heathen lands to imply any expectation on his part that the heathens must be converted before this Age will end. That such would be an impossibility is shown by the government statistics to the effect that the numbers of heathen have doubled during the past century.

What he does expect is, that as there are a few of God's "very elect" in all denominations of Christendom, now to be garnered, so also there are a few salutary ones amongst the heathen who have accepted Christ—including some of the missionaries. The "harvest" must cover as wide an area as did the sowing of the Gospel seed. To some extent the message of the Kingdom has been preached amongst all nations. The Bible is the special proclamation of Messiah's Kingdom as the hope of the world, and contains the "call" of the Church to joint-heirship with her Lord in that Kingdom, which will bless the world.

The essence of this Kingdom message, however, has been somewhat confused by reason of the many false notions set forth in our numerous false creeds of the past. In his discourses in heathen lands the Pastor intends to lay stress upon the Kingdom feature of the Gospel message. While it will be his privilege to proclaim the Kingdom message, he recognizes that only those who have the "ear to hear" will be able to appreciate and receive it. His message is one of the Bible, to which all Christians may rally, if they are rid of denominational ties: "The Church of the First-born, whose names are written in heaven," and whose Harvest time has come, are the Lord's, wholly irrespective of the denominations with which they are affiliated.

"Harvest Past, Summer Ended."

The text points out a lesson. Not all who have professed to be followers of Christ will be amongst the blessed ones of the "harvest," who are to be transported by the First Resurrection to glory, honor and immortality as their reward. The words of Jesus here cited in corroboration of this are: "Many shall say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not taught many, and in Thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works?" Many who thus hope will be disappointed—will be shut out of the Kingdom class.

Another of the Redeemer's parables, the Pastor said, pictures the consecrated saints of God in this "harvest" time as "virgins." But some were wise and some foolish. The masses of mankind, yea, the masses of Christendom, are omitted from this parabolic picture. Only the "virgin" class is dealt with at all, and it is divided into two parts, and only the wise, the faithful, "more than conquerors," will have the honor of entering into the wedding with the Bridegroom and becoming "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife." Then the door will be shut. No more will ever enter that door. No more will ever be added to the Bride company—the number of the "elect" will have been completed.

The parable shows that, later on, the "foolish virgins" pass through great tribulation and obtain the oil and the light which they should have had before. But it will then be too late to become of the Bride. They will knock, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" but the Bridegroom will declare, "I do not recognize you," as members of My Bride. However, the Scriptures show us that these "foolish virgins," passing through a great time of tribulation, will be called to "the marriage supper of the Lamb" and be present before the great King as the virgins, the Bride's companions, and subordinate helpers.—Psalm vi, 13-15.

One lesson, said the Pastor, is that it is not sufficient that we say, Lord, Lord—that we publicly proclaim ourselves Christians—nor is it sufficient that we be engaged in good works, casting out demons and healing the sick and teaching the people. These things in their way are good, but God has His own test as respects those who shall be accepted as members of "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife." Obedience to the Word and Spirit of the Lord, loyalty to the Master and to all His followers, faithfulness to His leadings, through evil report and through good report, will be required.

The greatest work of which any of Christ's followers are capable is the conquering of self—the development of the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. Our privilege of being co-laborers with the Master in the proclamation of His Message is not granted because He needs us, but because we need the opportunities thus afforded for the development of His character-likeness in our hearts.

"I Never Knew You."

Our Lord implies a great number of nominal followers devoid of His Spirit, who in the end of this Age would not be bringing forth the fruitage that He desires, who would not be members of His called and chosen and faithful class, though outwardly, nominally, all of these. He points down to our day, saying, "in that day"—in the closing of this Age, in the testing time, in the time when He shall come to make up His jewels and to glorify them as His Bride, His members, His associates in the Kingdom. Many at that time—in our day—will profess that they know the Lord, that they are prophets or teachers, that they are casting out devils, opposing sin and multitudinous forms of evil, and that they are carrying on mighty works, benevolent institutions, colleges, seminaries, etc., in His name. The Revised Version gives, "by Thy name," intimating that the name of Christ is used rather as a charm, to conjure by.

But the testing time is near. The Lord will inquire respecting the fruit of these. He will not be deceived; yea, He will expose the bad fruit, that all may see that His judgment is just. It will be manifest that

neglect of His Word has led to degeneracy, decay—that the suckers of worldly ambition, pride, wealth, show, etc., have been cultivated, notwithstanding all of the trying experiences which might have served to prune these. It will be shown that many of the prophets of Babylon are false prophets, whose teachings have misguided the people and, instead of blessing, have done injury; instead of enlightening, have blinded. It will be manifested that many of them are ravening wolves in sheep's clothing, hungry with ambition for fame and prominence and honor of men, and willing to barter the interests of the "flock" for their personal aggrandizement.

It will be shown that much of this conjuring in the name of Jesus has been merely a cloak, under which, deceiving and being deceived, sectarian fruitage, and not the love, joy, peace and holy Spirit, have been cultivated. "The day will declare it," will show it, will manifest it. The whole world shall be witness eventually that God's name was dishonored, and His Word misrepresented, because false teachers were looking every one to gain from his own quarter—his own denomination.—Isaiah lvi, 11.

The Lord never knew the sects—He never recognized them. He never authorized them; they are of men, and for men, not of the Lord nor for the Lord's glory. Claiming that all there is of Christianity is due to themselves, they are proud and boastful and realize not that the Lord's true cause would have flourished far better without them, in the simplicity of the early Church—one in redemption through the precious blood and in consecration to the Redeemer. The gathering out of the Bride class and the leaving of the remainder will be saying in effect, "I never knew you, never recognized you, never authorized you;" and these unauthorized sects will go down in the great "time of trouble."

We are glad, however, that the thousands and millions who have been deceived by these false systems will have a glorious opportunity during the Incoming Age to come to a knowledge of the character of God as revealed in the fulfillment of His gracious plan. Thus many who miss the great "prize" may still have a glorious opportunity for the lesser prize of God in restitution, etc.

"Depart From Me, Ye That Work Iniquity."

We believe that there are active workers in the sectarian systems called "Babylon" who will yet be reached by the knowledge of the Truth and delivered. Our Lord intimates this, saying, "Come out of her, My people." Some of His people evidently are in Babylon, and it is our present mission in the name of the Lord to call these out—through the presentation of "Present Truth," which will show to all who are truly the Lord's where they stand, and their duty. Others of the active workers in the iniquitous systems, which are counterfeitings of the true, misrepresentations of God's Message and binders and enslavers of the Lord's people, because not at heart loyal to Him, will not come out of Babylon, and therefore will share in the condemnation coming upon her. They will go into the great time of trouble, and for a season at least be cut off from all fellowship with the Lord. These workers of iniquity will have their hands full of the trouble which they have helped to bring upon the world of mankind by their misrepresentations of the Divine character and Plan. It will be a terrible chastisement, and our hope for them is that "when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, all the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."—Isaiah xxvi, 9.

On the Rock or on the Sand?

The picture or parable of one house built upon the rock and the other house built upon the sand refers not to the Church and the world, but to two parties in the Church. None are in the parable except "those who hear these sayings of Mine." The world hears not our Lord's message at all. As the Apostle declares, the world is both deaf and blind to spiritual things. Those who hearken to and appreciate the Lord's sayings represent at least a nominal Church, and amongst those of the nominal Church are some who are obedient to the Lord's Word, while others are disobedient. The obedient are built upon the rock, the disobedient upon the sand.

Those who build upon the rock our Lord explains to be such as not only hear His message, but are obedient thereto to the extent of their ability. Let us remember the words to which He refers—they are the message of the Sermon on the Mount, which show the things which are blessed of God in contradistinction to the things which would not have His approval.

Those who hear the Master's words and say, "Yea, Lord," but who do not put His teachings into practice, are not built properly upon the rock of Truth, upon Christ. They are building their hope, their faith, their trust, upon a foundation which will not stand. When the time of trouble comes upon such their hopes will be undermined, their faith will collapse.

We thank God that although many of the nominal professors of Christianity and teachers and philanthropists will not be accepted amongst the elect Bride class, nevertheless they are far too good, too noble to merit eternal torture. Nay, the Lord will not even consign them to the Second Death, to annihilation. Rather, He will provide for them, under Messiah's Kingdom, a gracious opportunity of attaining and demonstrating a still higher type of love and loyalty than they have yet experienced or manifested. In proportion as any shall even then faithfully use the great privilege accorded him, his ultimate perfection and salvation will be assured.

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