

# Pastor Russell's Sermon

## PREACHING TO THE HEATHEN.

### Pastor Russell Delivers Message of Love.

#### ON INDIA'S CORAL STRAND.

Preacher Asks Mohammedans to Remember God's Promise to Abraham. With the Coming of the Messiah the Glory of the Lord Shall Fill All the Earth—Darkness Shall Be No More and God's Promises Shall Be Fulfilled.



Travancore, India, Feb. 4.—The Foreign Missions Committee of the International Bible Students Association has reached here. Pastor Russell of the Committee is widely known in this District. His coming has been a topic of interest for several weeks.

Not only are Christian natives alert to meet him, but their heathen countrymen are, also, interested. Mohammedans have been inquiring. Has Pastor Russell any special message for us? The arrangement is that the Pastor shall spend a full week in this District and be at Madras next Sunday. He will, of course, be speaking every day and, although this will be done through an interpreter, the natives are keenly alert to hear what they call, God's Love Message. Addressing a large crowd under rather unfavorable circumstances, the Pastor said:

I have chosen as my text on this occasion the Message of the angels at the birth of our Redeemer—"Fear not! Great joy, which shall be unto all people." (Luke II, 10.) I feel that I am not entirely a stranger to many of you, nor you to me. For a considerable time I have seen regular reports sent in from this District to the International Bible Students Association, of which I have the honor of being President. These reports informed us of your growing love for God and for the Message of His grace set before us in the Bible. Everything of interest that transpires amongst you here is promptly reported to us—the numbers who attend the meetings, the numbers of adults baptized and the numbers of children consecrated by their parents.

These reports in turn are published to the Bible Students all over the world. We want you to know of the Christian love of these children of God of various nationalities who are represented by the Committee now before you. We desire to know of your spiritual state and of what may be done wisely and economically to forward the same. Our Society is not wealthy, but the little that it possesses is most cheerfully and economically used in the service of the Lord and His Cause.

Even some of your faces are familiar to us, for Brother Devanahayam sent us the photos of his native assistants of this District. No doubt he explained to you his own marvelous experiences, as he told them to us. How, at the son of a native Methodist missionary, he thought to follow in his father's footsteps, after obtaining an education. He came to America, and, as a result of a four years' course in a Methodist College in Ohio, found himself an agnostic—a Higher Critic, an Evolutionist, a thorough unbeliever in the inspiration of the Bible. Too honest to preach what he no longer believed, he abandoned missionary intentions.

Later, six volumes of "Studies in the Scriptures," published by the International Bible Students Association, brought the brother back to the Bible and to a fuller and more intelligent faith than he had ever before known. Then he had a Message of "good tidings" for his race, and God's providence sent him back to you; and now the true light, through his instrumentality, has reached many of your hearts and brought gladness through a more intelligent knowledge of God, through His Word. Ah, dear friends, we all know what a joyful Message of Truth has come to you, and we trust that you will be faithful in letting your light shine before others and thus glorify your Father in Heaven.

The Father of Mercies. Two days ago, on the Island of Ceylon, my attention was drawn to the tomb of the good Bishop Heber. Immediately to my mind came the words of his well-known hymn.

"What though the spicy breezes Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle, And every fragrant plant, And only man is vile?"

From childhood I had sung those words, and finally found myself on Ceylon's Isle. Hal, my dear hearers, I am not so sure but that the dear Bishop exaggerated a little the villainy of the human type of this vicinity. Poverty, indeed, I see on every hand, and, if vileness be measured by our great Creator by lack of wealth, then certainly you are vile in comparison to some more wealthy. But can we really believe that this is the Divine standard? Shall we not rather believe the words of Jehovah, "Man looketh upon the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart" (I Samuel XVI, 7).

I am not here to flatter you—not here to say that poverty is a proof of purity of heart. On the contrary, it

is my duty as a minister of Christ to declare that there is none righteous, no, not one. But I may say to you that, admitting that all men have sinned—some in ways more peculiar to one nationality and some to another, it is ours to point out the need of an Atonement for sin and the fact that "The blood (the sacrifice) of Jesus Christ our Lord, cleanseth us from all sin"—Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other Name given under heaven or amongst men whereby we must be saved"—Jew or Gentile, bond or free, Caucasian or Indian.

I believe, therefore, that I cannot do better than to relate to you the "Old, Old Story," of the love of God manifested in Christ, the Redeemer. My text tells that Old Story in precious words of life, which had well-nigh been lost during the darker ages and since; for many of you may be surprised to know that the vast majority of people in Christian lands have very slight conception of the love of God. Indeed, I am sorry that it is true, but the faith of many Christians, as expressed in their creeds, is more terrible, more God-dishonoring than are the beliefs of any heathen in the whole world.

I am glad to tell you, however, that really very few people in Christian lands any longer believe their own creeds. I know not how much of them are preached here. True Christian people are much better than their creeds. They have a sympathy for you who live in these parts and for residents of other benighted lands. Many of them give liberally, whether wisely or not, in their desire to benefit the heathen.

I assure you that however much their creeds assert it, these kind-hearted people do not believe that the masses of mankind are bound to eternal misery because of not having heard of the "Only Name." They really do not know what they believe. The smoke of the "dark ages" still prevails to such an extent that their eyes of understanding cannot see "the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of the love of God, which passeth all understanding." They do know, however, that, although they are fallen from God's image through sin, they still have too much of His God-like quality of love to torture anybody, or even dumb brutes; hence they realize that there must be some mistake in the creeds which they have so long possessed, which consign all except "the elect" to eternal misery.

Now Look at Our Text. Note in our text the terms of a blessing intended of God for every creature. Two thousand years before the angels uttered those words God gave the same Message of hope and joy to Father Abraham. Let those of this audience who are Mohammedans, as well as others, call to mind the promise to which I refer. It was the promise with the oath, God, foreknowing that the fulfillment of the promise would be long delayed, made oath to it, so that all who trust in Him might have the consolation of that promise. And what is the promise? God said to Abraham, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Abraham was twice glad! He rejoiced that the curse that had rested upon the race would ultimately be lifted; secondly, he rejoiced that the blessing of the Almighty would reach mankind through his posterity. Neither Ishmael nor Isaac was the promised Seed—neither blessed the world. Neither Jacob nor Esau was the promised Seed of Abraham to bless the world, for neither of them did the world. Neither did the nation of Israel succeed in blessing the world; nor did they attain eternal life for themselves. The Divine Purpose looked down to Messiah and saw in Him the real Seed of Abraham through whom eventually Divine Power will be exercised and Divine Grace be shed abroad among men.

According to the Scriptures, the Messiah, the Deliverer, is composite—composed of numerous members. Each one of these members must be tested and proven in respect to his loyalty to God and to the principles of righteousness before he can attain to his glorious reward of the divine nature. God has foreordained how many shall constitute this Messiah company and what shall be their character-qualifications, according to which they may make their "calling and their election sure."

They must be so loyal to God and to the principles of His righteousness that they will gladly sacrifice every earthly interest, yea, life itself. It will be readily seen that there are not very many of such deep devotion as this, in the whole world. However, God, who knows the end from the beginning, declares that His purposes shall not fail, which means that He will succeed in the appointed time in finding the predestinated number of the proper faith, obedience, character.

Restrictions at First Only. The primary restrictions were that this glorious opportunity to become members of the Messiah, "the Seed of Abraham" for the blessing of the world, must be first offered to the natural seed of Abraham. Only after the worthy of these had been gathered could this great privilege be extended to others. But mark you well—the selection of this special class does not involve the "non-elect" in eternal torment, nor in any disaster. On the contrary, the gathering of the "elect" should be regarded as an assurance on God's part of the fulfillment of His larger promise, that through these saintly ones, the Messianic Body, great blessings are to be showered upon Abraham's natural seed; yea, and upon all the families of the earth.

The blessing of the world will be restitution. If, as the Evolutionists tell us, the Bible theory, that man

was created in God's image, is wrong and he is really the offspring of an ape, then Restitution would be the worst thing that could possibly come to mankind—to restore him to sinless conditions. But the Bible is quite right in giving the Divine declaration to man that he was created perfect and upright and in the image and likeness of God and that our defilement came through the sin of disobedience and that our degradation came through heredity and that we needed to be redeemed with the life of another—that "as by a man came death, by a man also should come the resurrection of the dead." The simple story of the Bible is of human degradation and death, of redemption and of a coming time of uplifting from sin and death condition to perfection and life. This offer will be as world-wide as was the condemnation which came upon our race through Adam. For six thousand years our race has been living under a reign of sin and death, but the Seventh Thousand will be the great Sabbath typified by Israel's Jubilee Year, in which all debtors went free and every man returned to his former estate.

The glorious possibilities of that thousand years are variously presented to us in the Bible. It is to be the New Day, to be ushered in by the Son of Righteousness with healing in His beams. Ignorance and sin, sorrow and death, shall flee away—darkness and superstition shall vanish. Satan shall be bound for a thousand years and deceive man no more. Messiah will reign with Divine Power. A Priest upon His Throne, He will extend mercy to those whom He rules. He will instruct them, succor them, uplift them, and, as the hand of God, will wipe away all tears.

Meantime the earth itself will be made to "blossom as the rose" and to "yield her increase," and "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad." "The knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea." The result will be that "every knee will bow and every tongue confess" to the glory of God, for all who shall reject this wonderful demonstration of Divine Power and love will be esteemed unworthy of any further favors and will be destroyed from among the people, in the Second Death. St. Peter tells us that all the holy Prophets told this blessed story of coming restitution. See his plain statement of the matter in Acts III, 19-23.

A Redemptive Sacrifice Necessary. We must not forget that in the Divine arrangement a sacrifice for sin was necessary. Because of his disobedience, Adam was condemned to death, but not to eternal torment, as our creeds mistakenly declare. His race in him, when he sinned, shared his penalty; hence we are a dying race—mentally, morally and physically wrecked. God could not justly set aside His own sentiments and declare us worthy of His favor and His gift of eternal life. But since all came into this condemned condition through one man's disobedience, it was possible that all should be released from the death sentence through the sacrifice of our Redeemer. "As all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive, every man in his own order."—I Corinthians XV, 22, 23.

Here we have an important question: Has a Redeemer been provided so that God can justly permit Messiah to awaken the sleeping members of our race and to uplift all out of sin and death, back to human perfection and an earthly Eden, world-wide? The answer is, Yes. Jesus left His heavenly glory and was made flesh, "that He by the grace of God should taste death (not eternal torment) for every man." (Hebrews II, 9.) His reward of the Father was a glorious exaltation to the right hand of Divine Majesty, "far above angels, principalities and powers." Thus He was qualified to rule and to bless those whom His death redeemed.

Why, then, does the Messianic work delay? Why did Jesus not immediately begin the work of restitution? The Bible answers the question most clearly. It assures us that before that work can begin there must be selected from amongst men, by a special call and by special tests, a saintly class, a "little flock," to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom in joint-heirship with His only Son, the Redeemer. So, then, what remains is for all of this class to finish their course with joy and then, by the First Resurrection, to pass beyond the veil to be forever with their Lord as spirit beings—partakers of the divine nature, far above angels, principalities and powers.

Then the spiritual Seed of Abraham will be complete, and then it will begin its work of blessing, first the natural seed of Abraham, and, subsequently, all the families of the earth. If at first we were inclined to feel impatient of the long delay, we are checked by the thought that if the work of God in the selection of the spiritual Seed of Abraham, "like unto the stars of heaven," had been completed sooner, we would have missed the glorious opportunity of becoming members of it. Rather, therefore, let us rejoice in the delay, realizing that the world in general suffers nothing in death, but merely sleeps until the resurrection morning. Let us be glad and rejoice and give glory to God and strive to make our "calling and our election sure" to a place in Abraham's spiritual Seed, of whom St. Paul declares, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians III, 29.) How glad we will may be and how much we will may rejoice in the glorious Plan of our God, whose length and breadth and height and depth transcend our highest hopes and ambitions!

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