

Pastor Russell's Sermon

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS. Realization of the Divine Promise to Mankind. SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH.

Pastor Russell, preaching at Calcutta, says that the fulfillment of the Lord's Plan for the Salvation of the World is just beginning—points forward to Messiah's Kingdom as the time when all the families of the earth shall be blessed.



Calcutta, Feb. 13.—The Foreign Missions Investigation Committee, appointed by the International Bible Students Association, is here. The committee expedite their work by each giving special attention to a different feature of their investigation. This is their third week in India and they have already traveled nearly two thousand miles. They are keenly interested in the heathen and in the Bible, but they decline to give in advance any hint of what their report will be as respects the missionaries and their work.

Pastor Russell, Chairman of the Committee, preached twice today to large and attentive audiences in our finest Auditorium. One of his addresses, from Jeremiah 17, 23, 24, we report. He said:—

Your "City of Palaces" greatly impresses me, as doubtless it does all who visit it. But as I look at its splendor I am reminded of that portion of my text which declares, "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth." Whenever we go we perceive that man, by virtue of his creation, is a worshiper. The organs of reverence and spirituality, although only partially developed and much shattered by ignorance and superstition, are to be found in every man and their position is the very highest in his organization. My journey to this city has impressed this thought deeply.

I stopped a route at Juggernaut; the very name called up the stories of my childhood which so greatly aroused my sympathies for the poor heathen. Missionary reports told of how in ignorance the natives would throw themselves before the great Car of Juggernaut, feeling it an honor to thus sacrifice their lives to a false god. And now, here I am on the Ganges River, of which in childhood I heard so much that thrilled my heart with sympathy—how mothers threw their babes into the Ganges, not because they had no sympathy with their offspring, but because they desired to sacrifice to and propitiate their gods. Now that I am here I do thank God that, although the heathen have not been converted to a true knowledge of the great Jehovah, they have, nevertheless, come under the strong hand of the British government, which, whatever its defects, seeks at least to protect its subjects from the extremes of their own ignorance and superstition.

The Desire of All Nations.
While it is true that the worst form of government imaginable is preferable to anarchy, and while it is also true that the British Government is amongst the most just in the world, nevertheless, no government that fallen man has ever made or can make can ever satisfy the ideals of the more intelligent. Hence for centuries the heathen world has dreamed of a Golden Age to come and Bible Students have rejoiced in the Divine promise that the Messianic Kingdom will follow our present arrangement and that it will be proved to be "the desire of all nations."

Oh, since we perceive the ignorance and superstition of heathendom, our hearts cry out for the promised reign of Messiah and the blessing that then will accrue to mankind! The very best that we have yet attained, in the most civilized lands, comes far short of the Divine promise of the conditions to prevail as a result of Messiah's rule. Then all ignorance, all superstition, all sin, all sorrow, all pain, all death shall be abolished and finally, with the willfully wicked destroyed in the Second Death, the time will have come when God's will shall be done on earth as fully, as completely, as it is now done in heaven. When "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" to the glory of God; when "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep;" when "no man will need say to his neighbor, know thou the Lord, for all shall know Him from the least of them"—it is for that glorious hope that we must wait.

"New We Know in Part."
Saint Paul wrote, "Now we know in part, but then we shall know even as also we are known." (I Corinthians XIII, 12.) Aha! every true Christian must realize how his own knowledge of God and that of his forefathers has so slightly exceeded the knowledge of the heathen and that he

found it difficult to "glory" in his understanding of God! Only those who are adherents to the declarations of the Bible that "God is Love," that His mercy endureth ever, that He is like a pitying father, that He is the God of All Grace, the Father of Mercies, the length, breadth, height and depth of whose loving-kindness we cannot measure—only such have the assurances which enable them to offset the horrible theories of our creeds formulated in a darker past and which told us more horrible things respecting our God and His treatment of mankind than our poor heathen brethren ever imagined.

The Key of the Divine Word.
But now the better day is dawning! We are seeing the glorious outlines of the Divine character in the Divine Plan as never before! Our hearts first led the way and rebelled against the dictum of our fallacious reasoning. And now, in God's due time, when nature is yielding up her secrets and chemistry is making the world anew, behold, the key to the Divine Word is thrust into our hands, unlocking its mysteries and explaining its parabolic symbols to our astonished faith! But alas! meantime many of the brightest minds of the world have rejected the Bible, many of them even denying the personality of the Creator; and so far have these gone in the substitution of human wisdom for Divine Revelation that it seems impossible for them to return to the path of faith.

Now, however, is the time for all of those who have a hungering and thirsting after God and His righteousness to begin afresh the study of His Word in the light of the morning of this New Dispensation. Not only is this necessary for our own comfort and establishment, but it is necessary also in the interests of others before whom we stand as bulwarks of the Truth, having on the whole armor of God, the Helmet of Salvation, the Shield of Faith, the Breastplate of Righteousness, the Sword of the Spirit—necessary for self-protection and for the aid of all who "are feeling after God if haply they might find Him"—Acts xvii, 27.

Knowing Our God.
Our Redeemer declared, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true and living God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Evidently the great Teacher had in mind the thought of our text—not merely a knowledge *about* God, but an acquaintanceship *with* Him, such as can come only through a fellowship of spirit and an understanding of the Divine Program. None, however, are permitted to come to such intimate knowledge except as they shall manifest heart-loyalty. Each step of progress in our loyalty to God brings that attitude of mind which is pleasing to Him and which, when thoroughly demonstrated, will be rewarded with everlasting life. Thus knowledge is intimately bound up with our eternal prospects.

Earth's teeming millions know not God. Even those portions called *Christians* worship the true God with but slight appreciation of His true character. None of these, therefore, are in the condition to claim everlasting life according to the teaching of the Master. They are the non-elect, in contrast with the faithful few, who are Scripturally styled "God's Elect," "the Very Elect," and who are urged to make their calling and election sure by persevering loyalty even unto death.

In our blindness of the past, assuming that all the non-elect would be assigned to an eternity of torture, we have published in our missionary reports that ninety thousand every day go down into death, into Christian graves—and, by inference, into eternal torture. Alas, how misunderstood and how unintentionally misrepresented has been our gracious Father, the God of All Grace, the Father of Mercies.

Now we read His character in fairer lines as we perceive that the fulfillment of His great and wonderful plan for the salvation of the world is merely beginning—that the election of the Church to be the Bride of Christ and joint-heir with Him in His glorious Kingdom merely marks the time for the setting up of that Heavenly Kingdom, the rule of which is to bring such blessing and opportunities to mankind—the non-elect. Now we perceive that for a thousand years the Elect, on the heavenly plane, invisible to men, "like unto the angels," will live and reign with Christ (Revelation xx, 4) for the blessing of the non-elect—for their uplifting from conditions of sin and imperfection back to the glorious heights of the image of God in the flesh, lost by Adam's disobedience and redeemed by our Saviour on Calvary, and to be restored to Adam and all his children found willing to receive it on Divine terms.

In view of these things, how reasonable that we find the Apostles and Prophets exultingly pointing forward to Messiah's Kingdom as the time when all the families of the earth shall be blessed. How this explains to us the fact that our Redeemer gave so many parables illustrative of His Kingdom—describing the class which would constitute the Royal Family and the trials and difficulties of their way while proving themselves worthy to share with our Redeemer in glory; and the conditions in which they would be at His

side sitting, when the "wise virgins" only would be accepted to the glorious honor of becoming the Bride, the Lamb's Wife; and how the "pounds" and "talents" granted us in the present time must be used faithfully if we would hear His words: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

How Glory in This Knowledge?
In the past we have gloried as sects

and parties in our various creed-idols of which we are now ashamed. We perceive that creed worship did us almost as much injury as did idol worship to the heathen. Nearly all these creed-idols declared eternal torment for the thousands of millions who had never heard of the Only Name. Indeed, nearly all of them claimed that only a small minority of Christendom would escape eternal torture. Some of these horrible theories of our creeds formulated in a darker past and which told us more horrible things respecting our God and His treatment of mankind than our poor heathen brethren ever imagined.

Our colleges and universities—and, sad to say, our theological seminaries—are busy turning out unbelievers—infidels. Nor are these people wicked or immoral in their unbelief; they are as well-meaning as ever, but have lost their way. They reject the Bible because they believe it to be the foundation of the various inconsistencies in their creeds; they are stumbling for lack of knowledge; they cannot believe that man's hereafter is one of centuries of suffering, or of eternal suffering.

Let us now demolish these idols which so long have misrepresented our gracious Creator and blinded us with ignorance and superstition. Let us receive the Scripture teaching only. Let us rejoice in the election of the Church to be the Kingdom class and let us rejoice in the hope of its Kingdom glory for the blessing of the non-elect. Let us rejoice that "the wilderness shall blossom as the rose, and that the solitary place shall be glad" and that "God will make His footstool glorious," during the thousand years of Messiah's Kingdom. So desiring we will come into line with our text: "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth."

Now We See Obviously.
Saint Paul declares: "Now we see obscurely." Only by faith can we see God's loving-kindness. The reign of sin and death for six thousand years has been but the natural result of the violation of Divine Law which our first parents transgressed. The beginning of God's work for our reclamation from its consequences was in the sending of His Son to be our Redeemer. Since then He has been gathering an elect few to be Messiah's Bride and joint-heir in His Kingdom. Soon—very soon, we hope and believe—the Church will be completed and the Messianic Kingdom will manifest Divine clemency, mercy, loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth.

The Bible declares that the penalty for sin is being experienced by humanity at the present time—the death penalty—and that the redemption price of Christ's death is sufficient for the sin of the whole world. It declares that on account of this redemption, ultimately the resurrection of the dead shall take place—"all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth." It is because of the Divine intention that there shall be a resurrection of the dead that the Bible everywhere, both in the Old and New Testaments, speaks of those who have died, both good and bad, as being "asleep," and the promise is that "They that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake."

Nor will they come forth to similar conditions of sorrow that now surround us all. On the contrary, the First Resurrection is to be composed of the holy, the saintly, and they are to be associated with their Redeemer as his Bride and Consort, to assist in delivering and restoring mankind. Later the imperfect, who have not had their full trial, the great mass of mankind, will be brought forth, that they may learn the ways of righteousness, that they may learn to know God, and Jesus Christ, and in due time be uplifted out of the conditions of sin and death. Then will come the world's opportunity. How joyful is the message, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor dying; for the former things have passed away!"

Ah, how different is God's proposition of a general uplift of the worthy and their assistance back to perfection—to all that was lost in Adam! How different is this from the "doctrines of demons," which have perverted us, which have divided the Church of Christ into nameless sects and parties, and which have almost driven us from Christ and the Bible!

Only those can see the grace of God now whose eyes have been enlightened and whose ears have been unstopped. Thank God, however, for the gracious promise that in due time "all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped;" then "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep" (Isaiah xxxiv, 5; Habakkuk ii, 14). Then many will respond to the Divine clemency and become children of God, children of the Messiah, and heirs of everlasting, earthly life and His earthly Paradise, even as the "elect" of this Age, who come to a true knowledge of God, will be heirs of life eternal on the spirit plane, far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named, as Messiah's Bride and Joint-heir.

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