

Pastor Russell's Sermon

HOW JESUS PREACHED TO SPIRITS IN PRISON

Who They Are and What Was Their Offense.

"CAST DOWN TO TARTARUS."

Pastor Russell, at Georgia's Capital, Tells How Angels Once Materialized and Took to Themselves Wives From Among the Daughters of Men—Now Imprisoned in Earth's Atmosphere.



PASTOR RUSSELL

We are particularly told that the offspring of this improper union between the angels and the daughters of men were giants, both physically and mentally superior to the fallen human family—"men of renown." And this statement, that they were "men of renown," was at a time when manhood's estate was reached at a hundred years, and implies that God did not interfere to hinder or stop the progress of sin for perhaps several centuries. In the meantime the race had become so corrupt that apparently only Noah and his family were uncontaminated—all others had more or less come under the influence, directly or indirectly, of these fallen angels or their giant sons. Hence, of Noah it was written (not that he was a perfect man, but), "Now Noah was perfect in his generation" (uncontaminated) and his family apparently the same. Hence these alone were saved in the ark, while all the remainder, more or less contaminated, were destroyed by the flood.

"In Chains of Darkness."
It was then and there that God imprisoned those spirits, angels, who kept not their first estate, and are therefore called fallen angels, devils, demons. They were not imprisoned in some far-off world called hell, nor are they engaged there in stoking fires for the torture of poor humanity. Following the leading of the Scriptures we find that when the flood came they were not destroyed because, while their fleshy bodies which they assumed might indeed perish, yet they would merely dematerialize, or assume their spirit conditions again.

The record is that God cast them down, that He condemned them to an overthrow—that they might not any longer associate with the holy angels, but must be reserved in *tartarus*—our earth's atmosphere. Here they were imprisoned, not in a special place, but in the sense of having their liberties restrained, "in chains of darkness." They were no longer permitted to materialize and thus to associate with humanity. These things are distinctly told us by St. Jude and St. Peter (Jude 6; II Peter 2, 4, 5)—an explanation in full harmony with the Genesis account of their fall.

Once Disobedient—Still Disobedient.

We of course cannot know that all of those fallen angels are still in a disloyal condition of heart. On the contrary, in harmony with our text, we may suppose that some of these fallen angels have since repented of their wrong course and it would be none too strong a way to state the matter—that any such repentant ones would surely have terrible experiences as a result. To be obliged to be in close touch and relationship with the more evil and malignant ones and to have knowledge of all their evil designs and efforts would be a terrible experience and, besides this, we may be sure that the rebellious would not hesitate to persecute the repentant ones in every conceivable manner, as they would be lawless, regardless of the Divine will.

On the other hand, the repentant ones would be obliged to restrain themselves and to not render evil for evil, knowing that this would be contrary to the Divine will. In other words, repentant ones amongst those fallen spirits, influenced by the preaching of Jesus or otherwise, would have a kind of purgatorial experience, and the very thought calls forth our sympathy.

When imprisoned or cut off from the privilege of materialization, many of the fallen spirits, we know not what proportion, continued their active opposition to God, after the manner of Satan. Hence they are spoken of as his angels, his messengers, his servants and he is spoken of as Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons, Satan, who sinned much earlier than the others, and in a different way, the Scriptures tell us was an angel of a higher rank, or a higher nature, and this superiority of his has made him the Prince or ruler over the hosts of fallen spirits.

Fighting Against God.

The fight of Satan and his fallen angels is against God, against all who are in harmony with Him, against all the regulations of righteousness, and against all the channels and servants whom the Lord may use. St. Paul's words along this line are forceful; he remarks that God's people counted not merely "with flesh and blood," but also "with wicked spirits in high positions," and the question arises, "Who is sufficient for these things?" The reply is that none is sufficient; without the aid of the Redeemer His church would be quite overcome and vanquished by evil.

Likewise, without the Redeemer's aid through His Kingdom, without the binding of Satan, without our Lord's releasing of the world from the bondage of sin and death, there would be no hope of the world's recovery from its present bondage. But with the Apostle we exclaim, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans VIII, 31.)

Through Mediums and Obsessions.

Satan's original plan of attack was to bring our race under his influence by misrepresentation—by putting darkness for light and light for darkness—for instance, the temptation under which Mother Eve fell. Satan there represented himself as Eve's friend, giving her sound advice. He represented God as having a selfish motive behind His command that our first parents should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan declared that God had told an untruth when He said that the penalty for sin would be death. Satan declared that man cannot die.

And has he not since kept up the same line of falsification? And has he not deceived the whole world upon this very subject? Do not all peoples in every land believe that when a man dies he does not die, but gets more alive—exactly Satan's lie of the first instance? How few have believed

God, even amongst His people who truly love Him, and who truly desire to believe the teachings of His Word! We have all been under a kind of "hoodoo." "The god of this world [Satan] hath blinded" our minds on this subject. We are now coming to see that death is the penalty for sin and that the resurrection is the salvation which God has promised and will provide.

Satan has had powerful allies and servants in the fallen angels, and it is through their persistence that his lie has triumphed over the Divine Word of truth—"Dying, thou shalt die." These fallen spirits have made various manifestations in every land for centuries, and thereby have apparently substantiated the theory that a dead man is more alive than when he was alive. Knowing that mankind would have nothing to do with them if their real personality were known they hide their personality and represent themselves as our dead friends who desire to speak with us, either directly or through mediums.

A further desire of these angels is to obsess or to get possession of a human being. Being chained or restrained from the privilege of materialization, the next most desirable thing in their estimation is to gain control over a human being and to use his body instead of their own. This is styled *obsession*, and persons so afflicted today are sent to an insane asylum where, it is estimated, they constitute at least one half of the entire number. In the days of our Lord these were not mistakenly supposed to be insane, but rightly declared to be obsessed. All remember the New Testament account that our Savior and His Apostles cast out legions of fallen spirits from humanity.

"Know Ye Not That the Saints Shall Judge Angels?"

We need not discuss this question with Bible Students, for it is too well recognized to be disputed. We suggest a topical study of this subject by all of our hearers. See how many times Jesus and the Apostles cast out demons, and note the particulars. Although we still have with us spirit mediums and many obsessed, we cannot know whether the proportionate number is greater or fewer than in our Lord's day. Since the world's population today is so much larger, the same number of evil spirits (which do not increase) would show proportionately less. But, however that may be, we may assume that some fruitage resulted from the great sermons preached to these in connection with the death and resurrection of our Lord, respecting which St. Peter tells us in our text. Additionally, St. Paul remarks, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge angels?" (I Corinthians VI, 3.) We do know that the holy angels need no judging, no trial, hence the Apostle must in some way refer to a trial or judgment or testing of these spirits in prison who were once disobedient, in the days of Noah. And if the judgment or testing is a part of the Divine plan, it implies a hope for them, and in conjunction with St. Peter's statement in our text it gives the reasonable inference that the preaching which Jesus did to them was not wholly in vain.

How Jesus Preached in Death.

Here arises another question: If Jesus was really dead, as the Scriptures declare, if "He poured out His soul unto death," and "made His soul an offering for sin," and His soul was not raised from the dead until the third day after His crucifixion, how could He in the meantime preach to spirits in prison, or to anybody else? We reply that He could preach in the same way that the Apostle refers to, saying, "He, being dead, yet speaketh" (Hebrews XI, 4); and again, in the same way that the blood of Abel is said to have cried to God—figuratively. Of one thing we are sure, namely, that Jesus gave no oral address while He was dead. He preached in the way we sometimes refer to when we say, "Actions speak louder than words."

It was the great object lesson which the fallen angels saw that constituted to them the great sermon that gave them a ground for hope. On several occasions the fallen spirits, when commanded to come out of human beings, declared that they knew Jesus. In the long ago they had known Him, when, as the Only Begotten of the Father, and His Representative, He had created them and all things that are made, and was also the mouthpiece for all Divine orders and regulations. They realized that He had come into the world to be His Redeemer; they perceived the great stoop that He had made from His lofty position on the heavenly plane to the servant position on the human plane. They admired His loyalty and faithfulness to God, but doubtless believed Him to be foolish; they never expected Him to arise from the dead. But when they perceived His resurrection on the third day to glory, honor and immortality, "far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named," His sermon to them was complete, namely, that "the wages of sin is death," but that "the gift of God is eternal life." (Romans VI, 23.) And as they realized thus the Power of God and the Love of God for His human creatures, the Apostle's words imply that this constituted to them a message of hope. Perhaps if they would show full contrition God eventually would have mercy upon them, even as He had had mercy and had provided for humanity.

The lesson is one for all. God's power is infinite, so is His love, His mercy, His goodness. Nevertheless, every wilful sin will have its punishment, a just recompense of reward, and only the willing and obedient shall have the Divine favor and everlasting life. Let each apply the lesson to himself.

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