

Pastor Russell's Sermon

MANY MANSIONS IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE

Jesus Is Preparing One of These For His Bride.

HEAVENLY HOME FOR LOYAL.

Pastor Russell Says the Jews Hoped For Earthly Paradise Restored—Jesus' Teachings Concerning a Heavenly Nature and Home Were New—His Leaving Was Necessary, but He Assured Them He Would Come Again. Meantime the Spirit of Truth Would Comfort Them.



Buffalo, N. Y., Dec. 15.—One of Pastor Russell's discourses here today was from the text: "In My Father's House are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . . I will come again to receive you to Myself."—John xiv, 2, 3.

For more than four thousand years before the Savior came, no suggestion had been made respecting any home for humanity aside from this earth. The paradise of Eden, lost through disobedience, and God's image in humanity, almost obliterated by sin and death, God promised to restore. The right to life forfeited by Adam for himself and his race, God purposed to restore to all the willing and obedient. But all these blessings were to come through a Redeemer, the Mediator of the New Covenant, the Messiah.

Humanity knew not the possibilities of Restoration, but Israel had the fact typified in their Jubilee year of Restoration, which occurred every fifty years. They also had typical sacrifices of a Passover lamb and Atonement Day offerings, representing some means by which God justly met for them the requirements of His own Law. They realized not that this satisfaction of Justice would be accomplished by the death of the very Redeemer who subsequently would be the Restorer.

Their minds naturally dwelt especially upon the great fact that Messiah was to be of Jewish stock; and that Israel was to have the first chance of the choicest blessings in connection with Messiah's Kingdom. As they waited for Messiah and His Kingdom, they fondly anticipated their own national blessing. Seemingly, they overlooked the fact that the blessing would be an individual one, in harmony with the Divine arrangement. They hoped for a resurrection from the dead "at the last day."—In the great Seventh Thousand-Year Day or Epoch, and expected it to bring them from the sleep of death back to earthly conditions.

Some of them hoped for a "better resurrection" than the majority, because of their loyalty to God and their willingness to suffer for righteousness; but even these expected to be, not angels, but men. Was not Abraham himself promised that all the land which he could see should, eventually, be his? What could this mean except that he would be resurrected, as an earthly being, to enjoy this promised inheritance? St. Stephen points out that Abraham never received, in fulfillment of God's promise, as much of that land "as to set his foot upon." (Acts vii, 5.) Undoubtedly, therefore, the entire promise of the land is future. The possession will come to Abraham, and will be given to his seed, his posterity, after him.

Heavenly Promises—"Like Unto Angels."

God's plan was allowed to rest as though forgotten until Jesus began to accomplish another and different work. He began to call the Bride class from amongst mankind—both Jews and Gentiles. Without explaining the full details, He invited all who desired to become associated in His Kingdom to take up their cross and follow Him. He promised them a joint-heirship with Himself in His Kingdom. He told them that those who attain unto that Age and the resurrection, would neither marry nor be given in marriage—"like unto the angels"—sexless.—Luke xi, 35, 36.

No wonder the Apostles were surprised! No wonder Nicodemus hesitated to endorse something so different from what he had anticipated in the way of blessing; and he came to Jesus by night to inquire further! No wonder the Master's words were perplexing when He said, "Ye must be born again!" No wonder Nicodemus, in perplexity, asked about this spirit birth and found the answers perplexing! Jesus did not attempt to give him a full explanation, but merely said that if he had difficulty in understanding earthly things, how could he expect to understand Heavenly things.—John iii, 12.

Restitution Waits, but Not Abandoned.

The whole matter is plain in the light of the New Testament teaching. Before the time for blessing the world, God is selecting therefrom a class to constitute the Bride of Christ, the faithful Little Flock. The Church is to be associated with Him in blessing the human family with Restitution. But the Bride class itself is to experience a change of nature from human to spiritual. This was difficult for the Apostles to understand. Their minds would continually revert to an earthly kingdom, but the Master repeatedly drew their attention away from the earthly. He declared, "My Kingdom is not of this Age," and told the disciples that He would come again in power and great glory, and all the holy angels with Him; and that then He would sit upon the Throne of His Glory—upon which He would sit with Him, if faithful even unto sacrificial death.

Let us understand. Their minds would continually revert to an earthly kingdom, but the Master repeatedly drew their attention away from the earthly. He declared, "My Kingdom is not of this Age," and told the disciples that He would come again in power and great glory, and all the holy angels with Him; and that then He would sit upon the Throne of His Glory—upon which He would sit with Him, if faithful even unto sacrificial death.

The Heavenly Mansions.

The Lord endeavored to draw the minds of His followers away from the earthly hopes in common with all Jews. The disciples knew of various orders of beings on the angelic plane—cherubim, seraphim and ordinary angels. Jesus made no suggestion of changing His disciples into any of these angelic orders. Rather, He gave them to understand that they would constitute a new order of creatures. The questions then naturally arose, Is there a possibility of having a still different order of beings on the Heavenly plane? Did not the creation of man a little lower than angels imply a sufficient variety of creations on the angelic plane and higher?

These questions would seem proper enough; and to these our Lord's words make answer: "In My Father's House are many mansions—many apartments, many divisions. Yet all are holy, all are in full accord with Him and with each other. I go to prepare a place for you." My followers—A Heavenly mansion.

St. Peter, discussing the subject, tells us that in God's providence the Church is not only a New Creation, but a creation on a higher plane than any other of God's creation. St. Paul says that our Lord Jesus, having finished the work which the Father gave Him to do, "ascended on High," to the right hand of the Divine Majesty, to the place of chief favor. He declares that this position is "far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named."—Ephesians i, 21.

St. John, speaking of the Church, declares that we may not yet fully appreciate what we shall be, but we may "know that, when He shall appear [our Redeemer], we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." (I John iii, 2.) St. Peter, however, tells us the real height to which the Church, the Bride of Christ, is to be exalted. He says, God hath given "unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these [working in us His will] we might become partakers of the Divine nature."—II Peter i, 4.

The Heavenly Three.

Following the testimony of the Word of God, we recognize Jehovah God Himself, from everlasting to everlasting, God, the Head, the King, the Father, of whom are all things. Next to the Father we recognize our Heavenly Lord, whose name at first was the Logos, the Word of God, His Messenger, who subsequently was made flesh, dwelt among us and redeemed us; and who, as a reward, has been exalted to the Divine nature and is set at the right hand of Jehovah God, to begin His work of blessing mankind. He waits also until the Church, His Bride, shall have been completed and shall have passed beyond the veil, to be forever with Him on the Divine plane, His Joint-heir.

These are the Heavenly Three—all of the Divine Nature, far above all other natures, all other planes of existence. Yet always we are to remember that the Head of the Church is Christ, and the Head of Christ is God, as St. Paul declares: for although all of God's blessings are by the Son, yet those blessings are all from the Father.—I Corinthians viii, 6.

In passing, we should note how these Scriptures and all the Scriptures continually show that the Heavenly Father was not His own Son and that the Heavenly Son was not His own Father. In our text the Master declares, "In My Father's House are many mansions." Jesus, the chief Son, has special privileges and special power; and it is by the Father's arrangement that the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, is to be brought into the highest of Heavenly mansions, the Divine nature, to be Joint-heir with her Lord in His Messianic reign and in His everlasting glory thereafter.

"I Go to Prepare a Place."

But why did Jesus need to go to prepare a place? His disciples did not wish Him to go and leave them. Whenever He spoke along this line they were grieved and perplexed; and on one occasion St. Peter brought upon himself a special rebuke by saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; these things shall not happen unto Thee." The disciples were like children. They had absolute confidence that they were had absolute confidence that they were to share with Messiah the glories of His Messianic Kingdom. They wondered why Jesus did not stay with them and attend to the establishment of the Kingdom at that time; or if it were necessary to wait for a season, why He might not tarry with them instead of going to the Father, as He had often told them that He would do.

Our Lord did not wish to give them any intimation respecting the length of the Gospel Age, lest the knowledge should discourage them. Therefore He merely said, "It is expedient for you that I go away"—necessary for you that I go away.—John xvi, 7. Unless He should go away, they would not receive that power from on high, of which He had told them, which they saw exemplified in Him, and which they experienced when He put His power upon them and sent them forth as His representatives to work miracles and to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom.

After Pentecost, when enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they could understand the necessity for Jesus' leaving and for

His receiving the Holy Spirit begetting to the Divine nature. They, like all mankind, were children of Adam and therefore inheritors of his death sentence. The Father could not, according to His own just laws, recognize sinners as sons. Before they could receive the Divine begetting of the Holy Spirit they must first be justified in the Divine sight.

It was to justify the Household of Faith that Jesus ascended on High, "there to appear in the presence of God for us." He implored to us before the Father the merit of His own sacrifice, and proposed to adopt us as His members. Then Divine Justice accepted the Advocate's proposal, and that meant the acceptance of our professed sacrifices, as the members of Jesus.

Ten days after our Lord left His Apostles, the Pentecostal blessing came upon them. St. Peter explains that it was the Heavenly Father's recognition of His acceptance of the followers of Jesus who were entering into covenant relationship through Him by the covenant of self-sacrifice. The transaction involved all subsequent members of the Household of Faith to the end of this Age. As a result, the Holy Spirit came upon the consecrated. They were to be made children of God; and "if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, our Lord, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."—Romans viii, 17.

Growth in Grace.

Mistakenly, in the past, many of us have supposed justification to be the goal of the Christian—merely the forgiveness of sins. Now we see that this was a great mistake. Now we see that justification by faith is only a stepping-stone to sanctification—the begetting of the Holy Spirit as New Creatures in Christ. Moreover, we see that even our sanctification by the begetting of the Holy Spirit is not sufficient, nor our goal.

The Spirit-begetten ones must grow in grace, in knowledge, in all the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. They must be tested and proved as to their loyalty and faithfulness. Fery trials, testings, tribulations, must be allowed to come against them to prove the depth and sincerity of their love for God. Gradually, their testings are not along the lines of the flesh, which is acknowledged to be imperfect, weak, and which is acceptable as a sacrifice only through the merit of Jesus. Their testings and acceptance are according to their mind, their will, as New Creatures in Christ.

"I Will Come Again."

The Master would be absent during the period of the selection of the Bride class—in Heaven itself. Yet by His Spirit or Power, the Holy Spirit, which is also the Spirit or Power of the Father, He would have full knowledge of all the affairs of His people and would providentially make "all things work together for good to them that love Him." Suffer they must; endure trials and testings they must; in order to prove their loyalty even unto death; but His grace would be sufficient for them, and His strength would be made perfect in their weaknesses; and He would never leave them, in the sense of abandoning them. So long as they would abide in Him by faith and by loyalty of heart-intention, He would overrule all things for their good.

After the selection of the full number of the Bride class, He would come again to receive them unto Himself. He would come relatively in the same sense in which He has not been present throughout the Age. He would come in the sense of taking charge of the affairs of the world. He will take to Himself His great Power and begin His reign. His first kingly office will be in respect to His Church. He will call His own servants and reckon with them first. He will reward the faithful by allowing the unfaithful to pass into tribulation with the world.

As Satan has for a long time been "the prince of the power of the air," "the prince of this world," so Messiah, after blinding Satan for a thousand years, will assume His rightful title as the King of this world, the King of Glory. His Power will also be the "Power of the Air," or a spirit power; but, unlike that of Satan, it will be a Holy Spirit power. His saints will be called away with Him, to share His Throne and Empire, "the Power of the Air," His Spiritual Kingdom.

Thus the Bride of Christ will be completed, when the foreordained number of the Elect shall have been found and proved worthy by trials and testings, and shall have gone beyond the veil. Then the glorious Kingdom of Messiah will begin its work for mankind, restoring and blessing, for mankind, as Israel had understood very much as all the Holy Prophets had explained. Describing the coming blessings, which will begin with Natural Israel and extend to all people, St. Peter says, "Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must retain until the Times of Restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the Holy Prophets since the world began."—Acts iii, 19-21.

I exhort you, brethren, in the words of the Apostle Paul, "Let us rest, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short" (Hebrews iv, 1). If we have been begetten by the Holy Spirit, let us walk in harmony therewith. Let us endure faithfully the necessary trials and discipline, that we may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."—II Peter i, 10, 11.

THE COUNTRY SCHOOL TEACHER AS PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATOR

The country school teacher should be a public health educator, according to Dr. Charles E. North, of New York City, author of an article on "Sanitation in Rural Communities," just issued by the United States Bureau of Education. As the natural intellectual leader of his community, the rural teacher, he maintains, can do for public health in the country what the medical inspector and school nurse are doing in the city—point the way to clean living.

Mere teaching of physiology is not what is needed. Physiology may satisfy the curiosity of children as to their internal organs, but it does not protect them in any way against tuberculosis from contaminated milk, or typhoid from impure water. The rising generation, whether in the country or in the city, has a right to be instructed in the first principles of sanitary science.

Far from being too difficult to teach in the elementary school, the subject of public health can be made both understandable and interesting. Such a simple operation as washing the hands, for instance, becomes attractive when studied with reference to bacteria. "Personal cleanliness, purity of food and of drinks, the nature of disease, and the method of transmission, are all things which can be expressed in the simplest terms and made clear to the understanding children," asserts Dr. North. "Milk, its value as a food, the fact that it is highly appreciated by bacteria, and that it is therefore necessary to protect it against them—these are not too difficult for the child to understand."

Dr. North emphasizes the need of special training in this subject for school teachers. He believes that normal schools and teachers' colleges should have regular courses in public health, so that the country school-teacher may be armed with the essential facts of sanitary science.

Remarkable results may be expected to follow adequate public health work by rural school teachers. It is estimated that if effective sanitation were enforced the present average of 45 years for human life would be prolonged to 60. "In rural communities annually 400,000 persons die and about 2,000,000 others are seriously ill from infectious diseases. If only one-half of these deaths and cases of sickness can be eliminated, it means that an immense field of useful work lies at the hand of the country school teacher who will become a public health educator, and will instruct the children and the mothers and fathers how to prevent the transference of poisonous bacteria from those who carry them to those who do not."

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