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PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by
CHARLES T. RUSSELL,
Pastor Brooklyn Tabernacle.

Blessed Judgments.

"With My Soul Have I Desired Thee In the Night; Yea, With My Spirit Within Me, Will I Seek Thee Early: For When Thy Judgments Are Abroad In the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World Will Learn Righteousness" (Isaiah xxvi, 9).

Sunday, December 19.—Pastor Russell spoke today from the above text. Brooklyn Tabernacle was crowded with an attentive audience, as usual. We report the discourse, as follows: Only those who come to an advanced degree of knowledge of God's Word can realize how Divine judgments are all good—all blessed. Under the influence of the fog of superstition, not understanding aright the teachings of the Scriptures, supposing that they taught eternal torment for the great majority of our race, we feared God, rather than loved him. We dared not say that such a judgment was wrong, malicious, devilish, yet we were unable to see it in any other light; hence the general perplexity of Christendom, and the general alienation of heart, and many intelligent minds driven to infidelity, and the dislike to think about God and his supposedly terrible purposes respecting our race and the general awe respecting the Bible and the fear of its misunderstood teachings.

But now in the dawning of the New Dispensation the Word of God is shining as never before; one passage illuminating another, our fear gives place to reverential love and filial awe. We begin to understand that the torment doctrines which we received are wholly foreign to the Divine character, which, on the contrary, is distinctly marked by Wisdom, Justice, Mercy and Love toward all. We find ourselves now in agreement with the Scriptural declaration that God's judgments are "righteous altogether," and we delight in them. Instead of a judgment of eternal torment as a penalty for sin, we find a judgment or sentence of death. We agree to the righteousness of that verdict or judgment. God had the right to demand of his creature the obedience he was able to render. He had a perfect right to destroy him in death when he refused the blessing of life eternal on the terms of obedience. Seeing this, how rejoiced we are to note the Divine Mercy in the Plan of Redemption for the sinner and his offspring through the sacrifice of Christ! As a result we have good hope in his judgments; for him who once judged us worthy of death has with equal justice redeemed us and granted us the opportunity of eternal life through the resurrection.

It was another part of the Divine Judgment against our race that, instead of the death penalty coming instantly upon Adam and Eve, it came gradually, that through the processes of gradual dying they might the better learn the lesson of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin"—to the intent that, when granted the new trial secured by the merit of Christ's sacrifice, they might profit by it the more. The same principles apply to all of Adam's posterity. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now... waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans viii, 22, 19). They are waiting for the establishment of Christ's Millennial Kingdom under which they shall have a full opportunity of coming to a knowledge of the Truth.

This is God's provision for the world in general. What God did for the little nation of Israel during the Jewish Age, and what he has been doing for Spiritual Israel since Pentecost, in this Gospel Age, are matters separate and apart entirely from his general dealing with the world of mankind. The natural and the spiritual Seed of Abraham are exceptions to the rule. They have been granted special privileges and blessings not granted to the world in general—natural Israel under the Law Covenant and spiritual Israel under the Abrahamic Covenant. From these two nominal Israel's special "overcomers" have been chosen or elected. These shortly, in association with the Redeemer, will constitute the Kingdom of God. The overcomers of spiritual Israel, becoming the Bride of Christ by resurrection "change" to the heavenly nature, will be like him and share his glory and constitute the Kingdom class in the highest sense. The overcomers of natural Israel, resurrected to the perfection of earthly nature, will constitute the earthly phase of the Millennial Kingdom. Mankind may see and have intercourse with these, but will not see nor have direct intercourse with the glorified Christ, Head and Body—the King of Glory.

God Will Judge His People.
So far as the world is concerned, it has been under the one general sentence of Divine Justice, "dying thou shalt die." But so far as natural and spiritual Israel are concerned, they have been dealt with as freed from the original sentence and on trial for life or death afresh under God's judgments or disciplines. Thus it is written, "Jehovah will judge his people." Not all under these judgments have understood them—not all were in the condition of heart to receive their instructions. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his Covenant" (Psalm xxv, 14). Thus, during the Jewish Age, Israel often lapsed into more or less of darkness and idolatry and failed to see their special privileges and relationship to God under their Covenant. But amongst them were the few faithful

who with the eye of faith discerned the righteousness of God's dealing with them. Of these were the prophets who rehearsed the Divine dealings and rewards and punishments, that they were true and righteous altogether and merciful in the extreme. Similarly during this Gospel Age Christendom as a whole has not been in the condition of heart to hear, to understand, to appreciate, the judgments of the Lord. But some have been "Israelites indeed" who possessed the secret of the Lord and who were able to rejoice in his judgments—his righteous dealings. They realized by faith God's love for them. "The Father himself loveth you" (John xvi, 27). By faith they appropriated the Apostle's assurance that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans viii, 28).

God's Judgments in the World.
We have seen that God's judgments in the past have been merely with those who shall constitute the Seed of Abraham (natural and spiritual), through whom, according to the promise, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis xxviii, 14). We now note the fact that our text does not relate to either of these, for their judgments could be discerned only by the eye of faith. Our text refers to the world's judgments during the Millennial Age. Then God's judgments will be abroad in the earth—not merely confined to one nation or specially called class, but will include every member of Adam's race. And while these are declared to be the Lord's judgments, note the fact that they will be administered by The Christ, of which our glorified Redeemer shall be the Head, and his "members," when glorified, shall be the Body—the Church. The judgments of the Lord abroad in the earth will not mean havoc and dismay to mankind in general, but the very reverse—relief, assistance to all who come into line with the righteous arrangements of that Kingdom designed for their uplifting from sin and death conditions. The judgments of that Millennial Day of a thousand years will be severe—even to destruction—only against the willfully, the deliberately rebellious, after they shall have been brought to a clear appreciation of right and wrong, good and evil, and their penalties, life and death.

Mark the statement of the Prophet David when prophetically referring to the Millennial Age; he points out that the judgments of that time will be a cause of gladness. He says:
"Let the heavens be glad,
And let the earth rejoice;
Let men say among the nations, Jehovah reigneth.
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
Let the fields rejoice, and all that are therein.
Then shall the trees of the wood sing aloud.
At the presence of Jehovah,
BECAUSE HE COMETH TO JUDGE THE EARTH.
O give thanks unto Jehovah, for he is good:
For his mercy endureth forever."
—1 Chronicles xvi, 31-34.

A Millennial Judgment Day.
Mark the words of St. Paul respecting what God has in reservation for the world. He says God "hath appointed a day [the thousand-year day of Christ] in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts xvii, 31).
In this work ordained for our Lord he is to have associates—the "elect" Church, his "members," of whom the Apostle writes, saying, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Corinthians vi, 2.) And the Ancient Worthies enumerated by St. Paul (Hebrews ix, 28-40) will also be judges, but on the earthly plane as representatives of the heavenly Kingdom. As it is written, "I will restore thy judges as at the first and thy counsellors as at the beginning" (Isaiah i, 26).

Our All-Wise Creator, who has thus made provision, both for the heavenly and the earthly judges of the world in the election from Israel and the election of the Gospel Age, has thus demonstrated to the few who understand "the secret of the Lord" "the mystery" hidden from ages and dispensations past. It is evident that there will be no disappointment, no failure, in respect to God's great oath-bound Covenant made with Abraham—"In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The basis of the blessing is the redemptive work of Christ finished at Calvary. The outworking of that blessing will come through the glorified Lord and his Church, "his Body." The first work will be the establishment of a righteous government in the hands of those already proven absolutely loyal to God and to his righteousness—"faithful even unto death." We may have full confidence that in that Kingdom "righteousness will be laid to the line and justice to the plummet," as God has promised (Isaiah xxviii, 17). Not only so, but we may have full confidence that mercy will have a free hand there to do all for mankind that would be reasonable and possible. The combination of a strong government with merciful assistants is represented by the fact that our Lord will be, not

only the great King, but also the great Priest and Prophet and Teacher. Even so, also, the Church shall be "kings and priests"—their office, their service, will be a combination of ruling and healing, instructing and uplifting. Everything done will come under the head of judgment—righteous dealing. Every good deed, yea, every good effort, will be rewarded—its judgment will be a blessing, an increase of harmony with the Lord and with a character development and restitutional physical experiences (Acts iii, 19-21). Instead of the ways of darkness will be the way of light. Instead of the broad road leading to destruction with the masses going down thereon—to the tomb—will be "the highway of holiness." Instead of stones of stumbling we are assured that all the stumbling stones shall be gathered out of the way. Instead of beastly violence, overmastering temptations and besetments, devouring mankind because of their weakness to resist the Adversary, the Bible assures us that Satan will be bound and that the wild beasts of vice and degeneracy will all be brought into subjection. Thus "nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all God's holy Kingdom." "And an highway shall be there, and it shall be called. The way of holiness" (Isaiah xl, 9; xxxv, 8).

The Messianic Psalm (seventy-second) finds its application to that glorious Millennial epoch. Thus we read, "Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's Son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness and thy poor with judgment (justice). * * * He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy and shall break in pieces the oppressor. * * * He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."
"The People Will Learn Righteousness."

As already shown, God's dealings in the past have been with the world only in the sense of executing a general sentence for Adam's sin—a death sentence with all that that involves of mental, moral and physical degeneracy—dying. All of God's special judgments have been with those who were justified to special relationship through faith. If we were to judge of the number who will be blessed during the Millennium by the "little flock" of natural Israel and the "little flock" of spiritual Israel, saved under God's judgments in advance of the millennium, the outcome of the world's judgment would not appear favorable. But these would not be fair criteria. Present conditions are permitted in order to test and to prove the faith, as well as the obedience of those who are under trial or judgment and who, by reason of the fall, have such a faith as permits them to grasp the glorious features of the present call. Consequently, "few" there will be who will find the great reward now offered (Matthew vii, 14).

This is as God designs it, because he is selecting a special class. But the arrangements made for mankind in general are that the darkness and sin of the present time shall flee away. The dawning of the Millennium morning, with the rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his beams (The Christ in glory to enlighten the world), will mean that knowledge will be granted the world—facts, evidences, proofs. The world will not be required to "walk by faith and not by sight," as are the "elect" of this present time. Instead of the eye of faith of the present time will be the eye of understanding (knowledge), then. Instead of the secret of the Lord being kept from the world, all of his gracious purposes will then stand fully revealed. "The knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the great deep" (Habakkuk ii, 14). As a result none shall need to say unto his neighbor and to his brother, Know thou the Lord, for all shall know him, from the least to the greatest of them. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God (Romans xiv, 11). When every good deed shall receive promptly and manifestly its reward, and every evil deed shall receive promptly its punishment, the world will speedily learn to avoid the punishments and to win the rewards by obedience to the laws of the Kingdom.

The Scope of Our Text.
The Prophet in our text personifies The Christ, Jesus the Head and the Church his Body. Note the statement, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night" (Isaiah xxvi, 9). The "night" of sin has been upon the world for centuries. The "morning" is at hand, but not yet fully come. During the night time the faithful of the Church are represented as walking in the light of God's Word. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a lantern unto my footsteps" (Psalm cxix, 105). St. Peter says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place—until the day dawn and the day star arise" (II Peter i, 19). In this night time the "elect" are different from the majority of those around them—they desire God's righteousness and they pray, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done on earth even as it is done in heaven."

Song of Moses and the Lamb.
Those who now are able to "sing in the night" because of their appreciation of the Divine Plan are prophetically declared to "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee, because of the manifestation of thy righteous dealings" (Revelation xv, 3, 4).

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