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PASTOR RUSSELL'S SERMON IN BRIEF

Noted Bible Student's Discussion of Religious Topics of Absorbing Interest.

The following is a synopsis of the sermon preached here Sunday evening by Pastor Russell, of New York, and it is published by request:

Pastor Russell before dealing with his topic annexed a supposed objection—that the Bible, having been studied for eighteen centuries must be beyond any better understanding now. He answered this by showing that from the second century to the sixteenth—fourteen centuries, there was no Bible study at all. At least only in secret. He blamed this on the doctrine called "Apostolic Succession." The people accepted the bishops as successors to the divinely appointed twelve apostles and correspondingly hearkened to them and neglected the Bible. This was at a time when few could read and Bibles were worth a small fortune.

Even since Bible baring ceased and all are striving to understand it we are handicapped by the creeds of the "dark ages" deeply entrenched in our minds. Only now are Bibles convenient and cheap. Only now is education general. Only now do we have time and good light whereby to study God's word.

The speaker told of two heavens. One of these we have all known about is for the elect saints of this age. The other we have not known the Bible tells of as a world wide Eden. It will be established at Jesus's second coming and kingdom. It will be for all the non-elect who will come into word with that kingdom. All others will be destroyed by the second death.

There are also two hells according to the Bible. The first of these is the grave to which all go—good and bad. It is sheol, hades, the tomb. Jesus redeemed all from this hell by his death. At his second coming he will deliver all by the resurrection of the dead—just and unjust. The second hell will be entered only by those condemned to the second death. It will be an everlasting destruction like brute beasts. But only those who knowingly and willingly reject God and the millennial favor will be counted wicked and be thus destroyed.

Purgatory represents purification. All saints are being thus purified, purified, made fit for heaven in the present life—in order to be ready for the first resurrection charge.

The world will have a purgatorial experience during the millennial. They will receive "stripes" or punishment to teach them righteousness. If they are rightly exercised by those stripes they will not be destroyed. If not they will be destroyed in the second death—without remedy.

The grave marks the dividing line between the known and the unknown. All beyond the grave is held by faith, not by knowledge. How important then that we accept only Divine testimony on a subject regarding which none but the Almighty could enlighten us; We admit that our own guessing on this subject would be unsatisfactory. Why then prefer the guesses of other men who know no more on the subject than do we?

I know that Spiritism claims to have communications from the dead and that thus it has proofs. I admit that some learned men have become psychists and corroborate Spiritists. I prefer, however, to follow the Bible's teaching and to believe those men deceived. The Bible tells us that the intelligences which communicate through mediums are not dead humans but the fallen angels. The Bible tells us that these evil spirits, "demons," purposely strive to deceive humanity, and to misrepresent God's plans; and that God will not fully restrain them until an appointed time, but meantime permits them to test our loyalty and faith Godward.

Of course I am aware that the learned college professors and ministers of our day are opposed to the Bible, and believe it the greatest deception the world has ever known. Of course I know that they build their faith in a life beyond the grave, not on the Divine promise of a resurrection of the dead, but upon Plato's philosophy, older than the Gospel of Christ and contradicted by it. I agree with the poet—

"Each heart will seek and love its own. My goal is Christ and Christ alone!"

Others may be able to rejoice in their own and other men's guesses, but I cannot. I want as an anchor to my soul, as a foundation to my faith, a message from the One who knows—from God's word. I am here to address others of like precious faith in an infallible Guide.

I will not stop to dispute regarding the history of the Bible. Its inspiration is proven to me by its contents. However, I sympathize with those who have been turned away from God and the Bible because of the inconsistency of its supposed teachings. Ah, yes! I had my experience there. When I assumed that all taught by the hundreds of Christian creeds came from the Bible, I held it responsible for all their nonsense. Now I see better—that the Bible has been misrepresented in the house of its friends.

The Bible's teaching is logical, some will scoff. But hear me for my cause. Hear the Bible's own testimony—not what the creeds say it teaches.

It teaches that the dead are not alive anywhere—that a dead person cannot experience either joy or sorrow. It teaches that all hope of a future life by Divine appointment is vested in Jesus, who died that we might as a race be released from the death sentence inherited from Father Adam; and that thus Jesus might become the Life-Giver or Savior to as many as will return to God through Him.

The promise of the Bible is not that the dead are not dead, but that "the

dead men shall live." Because of the proposed resurrection of the dead they are figuratively said to "sleep." Thus the hope set before us is: "Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, they that have done good (that passed Divine approval, the saints) shall come forth to shine as the stars of heaven." They that have not been approved shall awake to shame and lasting contempt. Their shame will last until they reform—their contempt; and they shall cease to be contemptible, and learn and obey the way of God under Messiah's Kingdom.

This is the Entire Plan. Death with its attendant mental, physical and moral weaknesses is God's curse or penalty for Adam's sin of disobedience. Resurrection, uplifting from all this, is God's remedy—the lifting of the curse. The Redeemer's death was necessary as man's redemption price. Next in order will be His Messianic Kingdom. He must reign 1,000 years to fully overthrow the power of sin and death and to uplift, or resurrect the willing and obedient, thousands of millions of Adam's family for whom He died—"every man."

The perfect man, Adam, and his perfect, happy, Eden home were a picture, a prophecy of what all may attain, if they will, through the Redeemer's Kingdom. What a glorious outlook "Beyond the Grave" we find in the Bible for the world! Those refusing to progress, the Bible declares will be cut off from life in the second death. It will be like those who or Adam's death except that there will be no redemption from it—no resurrection from it. All consigned to it will, St. Peter declares, perish "like natural brute beasts;" in "everlasting destruction." St. Paul declares—

Note the beautifully sympathetic description of God's work for men through Messiah's Kingdom: "God shall wipe away all tears from all faces;" "and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" there.—Revelation 21:4; Isaiah 25:8.

The explanation is: He that sitteth upon the throne saith, Behold, I make all things new. (Rev. 21:5) A new heaven or spiritual power will have supervision of earth's affairs, and a new earth or social order will obtain amongst men. These are the glad "Times of Restitution" which St. Peter tells us will begin at the Second Advent of Jesus.—Acts 3:19-21.

Why So Long Delay? It is more than eighteen centuries since Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. Why so long a delay in bringing in the restitution times? If God is compassionate, why delay the resurrection work—the uplifting work?

The Bible tells us why! And the answer is soul-satisfying. We rejoice in the delay—that the Kingdom has not yet been set up and the restitution work not yet begun. God even tells us that He kept these matters a "mystery," a "secret," because this was wise, so as not to interfere with His purposes outworking. Now, in the dawning of the New Day, with its showering of blessings of every kind the "wise" of His people may understand—"The mystery shall be finished."—Daniel 12:10; Revelation 10:7.

The Hidden Mystery Revealed. The "Mystery" is that the church, as well as her Lord, and in association with Him, will be the world's Restorer—Regenerator. Not any of the nominal churches of Christ is meant, but the one, true Church, composed only of saints. These have been in process of selection for more than eighteen centuries. These are Scripturally styled "The Elect." All others are non-elect. "The elect," through the Messianic Kingdom, will bless the non-elect, by the resurrection uplift of that thousand years.

The Chief Resurrection. The elect, chosen from Jews and Gentiles, from every nation and age, will all be, Christ-like in character, in heart; all saintly. They will have a different reward a different resurrection or uplift from that of the world. Theirs is styled the First or

(Continued on page 10.)

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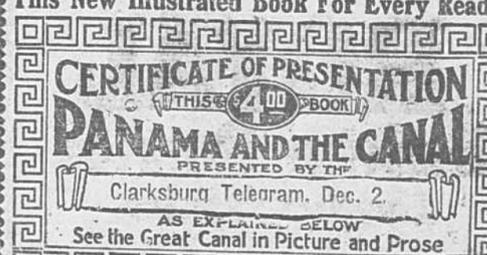
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