

PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

Response By Pastor Russell

(From 1915 Convention Report, Page 167)

I am sure, my dear sir, that I express the sentiments of the entire company here present, when I thank you on their behalf for this evidence of your sympathy and cooperation with us. I indeed esteem it a privilege to be a representative of the International Bible Students Association, and for your information, sir, as well as for the information of others here, I have pleasure in saying that our Association is a purely voluntary one. We have no denominational creeds—nothing whatever except love for God and His Book, love for fellow men, and our love for ourselves in that we are seeking to do those things that would be for our own highest welfare.

The Association, in choosing San Francisco at this time as a meeting place for the Convention, had in mind this wonderful Exposition. I had the pleasure of being here, sir, more than a year ago, and of visiting the grounds and seeing what preparations were under way. I was amazed at the expense that was being undertaken, and thought to myself then, as I still think, how much better is this way of expending than for war. How much better if those in Europe were doing likewise, instead of battling among themselves, destroying lives, homes and happiness.

I trust, my dear sir, that you, and all the people, are coming more and more to realize the fact that God has a great destiny, not merely for California, not merely for the United States, but that He is working out a great destiny for the whole world. We are glad today to recognize this great Fair, this great Exposition, with the wonderful manifestation it gives of intelligence and of thought, of skill and learning, of the use of time and talent for the service of humanity. We rejoice in all of this, not only for the good it may do here and now, and that it is doing to all of the people who visit this Exposition, but we rejoice in it in another sense. From our viewpoint it is one of the evidences that we are living in the dawning of a new dispensation. From our viewpoint as Bible Students, the great day of God's blessing, which is to last a thousand years, began in the autumn of 1874. We are not laying down these figures in any determined way, but merely, as before suggested, stating that we believe from that time the world has been entering upon a new dispensation, which is to be the most wonderful, the most peculiar ever thought of by human mind. That is the period the Bible refers to as the "Day of Christ." It is the time of Messiah's Kingdom. We are not of those who expect the world to be burned up. Rather, we are of those who understand the teaching of the Bible to be that the world is about to enter upon this period of great blessing. It has been under the curse for 6,000 years, according to the Bible, but according to the same Bible we understand the earth is to pass from under the curse during this period of blessing.

We recognize the fact that these great international expositions have been coming on since the opening of this new era. I had the pleasure of being at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. I thought it was a wonderful fair, and remember wondering if it could ever be surpassed. I have been at all of the great Expositions since, in this, and some in foreign lands, and have seen increasing evidence of skill. I have noted from the various Expositions as they follow one another, the grand progress that the world has made. All of these wonderful things belonging to our day indicate that we are in the dawning time of the great millennial kingdom. Although there is, as the speaker has said, a dark cloud hovering over a part of the world, the Bible indicates that this is to be the last great time of trouble—a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, and Jesus said “No, nor ever shall be,” indicating this will be the great, final trouble. After this great trouble shall come, Messiah’s kingdom, ruling over all the earth. This is intimated in the prayer Christ taught his disciples to pray, saying “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.”

We are not expecting this to come in any very sudden way, but gradually, grandly, steadily. The grand climax of blessing is to be, not merely for Bible Students, but God has wonderful things in store for all of mankind; for all the families of the earth. We rejoice that He has not merely blessings for the church, but that there are everlasting blessings for all of humanity who during the time of Messiah’s reign shall be willing to cooperate to their own uplift to a better relationship to God; to a better understanding of the Bible, the Word of God; to a better understanding of themselves, and how to get out of their degradation, and meanness, and selfishness into a condition of freedom from sin, and all of its entailments. Through sin Father Adam forfeited his relationship to God, and lost gradually the grand blessings he had enjoyed while obedient to the heavenly Father, his Creator. Because Jesus gave His life as a ransom price for Adam and his race, it will be their privilege during His reign to regain the blessings lost through sin. It is now possible, we believe, for those who are willing to become footstep followers of Jesus to receive God’s blessing in a still larger measure, in that they may thus be fitted for association with Him in bestowing the intended blessings upon the world later.

On behalf of the Bible Students now assembled, and those they represent in all parts of the world, I thank you for your kind courtesy.