

## **THE LORD IS ABOUT TO SET UP HIS KINGDOM**

The discourse below is by the Pastor as printed in the St. Paul Enterprise, Vol. 7, #25.)

Greed for Wealth and Power Opposite to That Which Will Then Prevail. World to Learn God Always Knew His Plan. (From Pittsburgh Dispatch.)

Reading, Pa., Dec. 17, 1905.—Pastor C. T. Russell addressed two attentive audiences in the Auditorium today. His evening text was, “The voice of one that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” (Isa. 40:3) He said:

All four of the Gospels quote our text and apply it to John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the Elijah to all those who had the hearing ear and understanding heart to appreciate the message and to accept Jesus. And yet, as we pointed out, John the Baptist did not fulfill by any means all that was predicted respecting the antitypical Elijah and his ministries which would be introductory to the Christ of glory. Indeed we have John’s own word for it that he did not fulfill all the requirements and conditions appertaining to the Elijah, for when he was asked point blank the question: “Art thou Elias?” he answered, “I am not.” (John 1:21.) In the power and the spirit of Elijah he did an introductory work to Jesus in the flesh, just as the greater Elijah, the Church in the flesh, has for nearly nineteen centuries been doing an introductory work as respects the great Christ of glory, Jesus the Head and King, the Church members of His body and associates in His Kingdom.

John the Baptist did literally enough dwell in the wilderness and preached there, thus typifying the experiences of the Church, which, during a large portion of this Gospel age, has been in the wilderness or hidden condition as respects the world and worldly history. Revelation tells us in symbolical language of how the Church fled into the wilderness condition for 1,260 symbolical days—1,260 years—which period ended with the year 1799. Since then the true mouthpieces of the Lord, His true messengers, the loyal members of the Elijah class, have gone forth from the wilderness condition, and the voice of their message is again heard in the world, though they are still separate—in spirit at least—to Churchianity, Babylon, and the world, Egypt.

John the Baptist’s message to those who would hear him, “Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,” has been similarly the message of all the truly consecrated of the Lord. The announcement is a two-fold one, first that the Kingdom is about to be established, and, secondly, that repentance and reformation are necessary to its proper reception and a share in the blessings which it will bring. Notice how much more accurately the description of our text fits to the antitypical Elijah than it did to John the

Baptist, who did something of the Elijah work to the Jewish nation as the body of Christ in the flesh has done to Christendom.

The voice does not declare that there is no wilderness, that there is no desolation, that everything is satisfactory and all right; it does not declare that God's Kingdom has come and that His will is being done on earth as it is done in heaven. Quite to the contrary, it declares that the Kingdom is to come, and that preceding it all who hear the message should join in preparing the highway or making right conditions for the reception of the Kingdom, that the world might receive God's Kingdom with joy and thankfulness and great blessing.

### **Elijah's Message Not Appreciated**

Similarly the message of the antitypical Elijah, the message of the true Church, the body of Christ in the flesh, has not been heeded by the world; has not been heeded by the nominal mass of Christendom. We may apply our Lord's words again here, and see that if Christendom had heard the message of the antitypical Elijah they would be ready now for the second advent of Jesus, ready to welcome His kingdom, glad to have it established in the world; they would have been praying from the heart what some of them have been praying from the lips, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, etc." But rejecting the antitypical Elijah, Christendom is unprepared for the kingdom. Indeed, it is perhaps more out of harmony with the conditions of the kingdom than it ever was before.

There never was a time when greed of gold seemed to have such power over all the civilized world as now; there never was a time when people in the most trusted positions rendered such poor account of themselves; never a time when so many proved unfaithful to their trusts. And all this greed for wealth and for power, the two being linked together today, means a very opposite spirit for that which must prevail under the kingdom conditions, when the Golden Rule will be enforced by the iron rod of power, when justice will be laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet, when the humble shall be exalted and the proud shall be abased. In a word, the world is probably less prepared for the kingdom than at any other time of the world's history, so far as the governments and representatives of the people are concerned; so far as their preparation for the kingdom by any highway of righteousness and holiness, the straightening of the crooked things and the smoothing of the rough conditions are concerned.

### **The Alternative Is the Divine Curse**

When the time of trouble shall have wrecked present institutions in anarchy, and when the world shall cry out to the Lord, as the prophet represents that it will do, earnestly desiring the reign of righteousness, then will be accomplished the things which the Church has been declaring should now be accomplished, if a sufficient number were

willing to do so, namely: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway of our God.” Mankind has not responded to this appeal to cast up a highway of holiness and righteousness. On the contrary, the various advantages of earth have been exploited for individual aggrandizement, and selfishness has continued to be the law instead of righteousness and equity. But the Lord will delay no longer; He is about to set up His kingdom; He is about to establish the highway of holiness, and so He tells us elsewhere, through the prophet, a highway shall be there and it shall be called a way of holiness, and the redeemed of the Lord shall go up thereon. In a word, that which mankind would not naturally respond to in the present time will be forcibly established in the future time, and meanwhile, because of unwillingness to respond, a time of trouble will come upon the whole earth, turning the sweets of selfishness and aggrandizement to the vinegar of disappointment, chagrin and loss.

### **Every Valley to Be Exalted**

The Elijah voice was to do more than merely call upon men to prepare a highway of holiness and righteousness in the present time. It was to proclaim, as the text shows, that whether they would hear or whether they would forbear the Lord would carry out His great and wonderful plan. Thus we find it positively stated: “Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low.” When the Lord undertakes this matter of the leveling of the conditions of society, bringing down the great ones and mighty ones, the princes of earth, financial, political and social, and lifting up the humble ones represented by the valleys, the masses of mankind, there will be no doubt at all that He will accomplish it to the full limit of His decree. There need be no doubt at all that eventually all the crooked things shall be straightened out and all the difficult and rough places, social, political and financial, shall be smoothed out.

Our Lord declared, pointing down to our day, to the time immediately preceding the establishment of His Kingdom in power and glory, that every secret thing should be revealed, every hidden thing should be brought to light. (Matt. 10:26) We may assume, therefore, that it is in harmony with this divine arrangement and program that at the present time the great things, social, political and financial, are being brought to light, being brought to the surface almost miraculously. The result is to more and more shake the confidence of the people in their teachers, representatives and rulers. More and more they will be inclined to have confidence in no one, and conclude that it is a matter of every man for himself. The result will be, what the Scriptures so clearly foreshow, an anarchous period in which each will be striving with his hand against his neighbor for his own personal advantage.

### **Judgment First, Next the Glory**

The prophecy proceeds to outline not only the voice of the antitypical Elijah would be heard in the wilderness, vainly crying that the way of the Lord should be prepared, but, secondly, that this work of leveling society, bringing down the great and lifting up the humble, will be accomplished—accomplished as we have seen by the great time of trouble which will come as a natural consequence of the rejection of the Lord’s guidance, and yet come as a specially foreknown and prearranged chastisement of the Lord; and following this comes the statement that “then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.” (Isa. 40:5) The result of the time of trouble will be the opening of the eyes of understanding of all the world, so that all shall see the grandeur of the divine plan, the Divine arrangement. All shall see God’s plan to be glorious in the extreme. As the heavens are higher than the earth so will His ways be seen to be higher than man’s ways. While the world will dread the dark day of trouble even now impending, yet after it shall have passed and after the glorious sun of righteousness shall have arisen with healing in his beams, after all the world shall behold the glory of the Lord thus manifested in the establishment of His righteousness and justice in the earth, the hearts of all will be made glad, and they will rejoice that God’s wisdom and love, His mercy and justice failed not in the establishment of the Kingdom, even though it required so great, so awful a time of trouble to bring it about, because of the unwillingness of mankind to respond to the divine invitation through the Elijah class.

### **God’s Utterances Sure**

As though anticipating the query of our minds as to how we can be sure that these results will be brought about, since we have seen more than eighteen centuries of Gospel proclamation and urging to repentance and preparation for the kingdom—how can we know that the great time of trouble will bring it about, and that all flesh shall recognize the grandeur of the divine kingdom and the blessings resulting? The answer of the Lord through the prophet to our query is in few words, “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” (V. 5) Ah, yes! The difficulty now is that few are able to hear the word of the Lord, few are prepared to believe His testimonies respecting the future, and yet He declares, “My word that goeth out of My mouth shall not return unto Me void,” etc. How surely then the message which was given to the Elijah class and which the world has not heeded will be accomplished and fulfilled in a way which the world would not expect, but fulfilled nevertheless, although through the severity of a time of trouble upon mankind.

This is one of the great lessons which the world is to learn, namely, that the Heavenly Father knew the end of His plan from the beginning, and that He foretold the affairs of the world, not by way of forcing results, but that mankind might learn of His wisdom and of His ability to discern the end from the beginning in every matter; and that learning also of His glorious character of justice and mercy and love all who desire His fellowship and seek it might be able to place absolute confidence in His arrangement for their welfare.

## **All Flesh Is Grass.**

The succeeding verses, 6-8, correspond well with what we have already seen and intimated, that at or about the great time when the crooked things would be straightened and the rough places smoothed and the mountains and hills brought low and the valleys exalted, preparatory to the revealing of God's glorious character to all mankind, there would be a special message sent to the Elijah class—"Cry. All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it." Surely in the parable the grass represents the people. The intimation is that the grass does not represent the saints, but the people who are not in relationship with the Lord, and this picture of the withering of the grass and the fading of the flower is but another way of telling us of the time of trouble which will wither all human hopes and blight all human prospects, and turn the world upside down temporarily until the blessing of the Lord shall come again upon them through the kingdom—until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets shall bring them the refreshing of His favor, the forgiveness of their sins, their reconciliation to Him through their Redeemer.

## **Speak Comfortably to Jerusalem**

It is the Elijah class that is referred to in the first and second verses of the context, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare [appointed time] is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

We cannot here go into details respecting the fulfillment of this prophecy, but will merely refresh the memories of those who have already read on this subject in the second and third volumes of Millennial Dawn. The time indicated by this prophecy, when Israel would have received its double or second portion or experience at the hand of the Lord, we have already shown was 1878 A.D. In that year Israel's disfavor, rejected of God, reached the exact period of length to that which had previously been their period of favor. It was then that the message was due to go forth to the Jew to the effect that the disfavor would begin to pass away and divine favor again return to the Jew—though it was pointed out with equal force that the favor of the Lord for a period of 37 years would be accompanied by great trouble, and that not until the close of that period and the glorification of the Gospel Church could the divine favor come fully back to the natural Israel, as we read in the words of the Apostle, "They shall obtain mercy through your mercy." In other words, natural Israel shall come again into a place of harmony and favor in the end of this age, divine mercy being manifested through the glorified Christ, the Church.

What we are now pointing out is that the message of comfort to natural Israel, which was due to begin to be proclaimed in 1878, was part of the message of the antitypical Elijah—the Church, the body of Christ this side of the veil. Israel’s sins are to be pardoned, blotted out, even as a little later on the sins of the whole world are to be blotted out, just as at the present time the households of faith have their sins forgiven on condition of their acceptance of Christ and their consecration to endeavor to walk in His footsteps. Other prophecies, as we have seen, also show the double in Israel’s history, that the one-half was a period of favor with chastisement and the other half a period of total disfavor. The Israelites themselves are inclined to notice this matter and wonder at it. Only from the standpoint of the Lord’s word can we see that the comforting message is for them, and that ere long their blessing will begin, and that the blessing of the Jew and the forgiveness of the sins of those who pierced the Lord is but the precursor of the still more widespread blessings of the Lord upon all the families of the earth.

### **Zion to Be Exalted.**

Continuing the examination of our text, we note that verses 9-11 give a very beautiful word-picture of the establishment of the Lord’s Kingdom and the blessing it will be to all those who will respond to its favors. We read, “O, thou that bringest good tidings to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O, thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’” In such passages as these the symbolical use of the word mountain signifies kingdom, and hence these words in the prophecy signify the exaltation in the Kingdom of those who constitute the Elijah class, and who now tell the good tidings of coming blessings to a world which is not appreciative of the message. Only a few have the ears to hear and the hearts to appreciate the words of God, and those few the household of faith, who are permitted to become members of the Elijah class now and of the glorified Zion hereafter, the Kingdom of glory.

Our message then is not only as to the glorification of the saints, but one also respecting the great honor and blessing and privilege that is coming to natural Israel, the prospective representative on earth of the heavenly Kingdom, which is to be invisible to men. It is the mission of the Elijah class to announce the Kingdom after this manner, to proclaim that the Kingdom is at hand, that the great Ruler of the World is about to take possession, that Messiah’s Kingdom is the Kingdom of God which shall ultimately prevail throughout the whole universe.

The message now to be delivered continues, “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him [Christ is the arm of Jehovah, stretched down for our deliverance from sin and death, stretched forth in the time of trouble to dash in pieces as a potter’s vessel all the hindering conditions and things now highly esteemed among men]: Behold His reward is with Him and his work [of recompense] before

Him”—to reward both the well-doers and the evil-doers according to their condition of heart. These rewards at the beginning of the millennial age will mean great distress and trouble, because some will rightly deserve, on account of their selfishness and failure to appreciate and act upon the principles of righteousness, severe punishments or stripes, as the Scriptures express the matter.

The gracious assistance which the Lord will lend to all the families of the earth during the millennial age are beautifully pictured by verse 11. All who then desire, after they have learned of the grace of God, will be permitted to become the sheep of the Lord’s pasture —“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom.” This account parallels our Lord’s parable of the sheep and the goats, in which He pictured the whole world during the millennial age on trial before Him and the Church with Him in His throne. Then all mankind will be tested as to whether or not they will develop the sheep characteristics and be followers of righteousness and truth and peace, or whether they will prefer to develop the contrary goat characteristics. All who become the Lord’s sheep shall eventually be blessed of Him with everlasting life, while all others will be punished with destruction, the second death, from which there will be no awakening, no redemption, no recovery.

Seeing then, dear friends, the message that the Lord has given us as the Elijah class, let us do our share in proclaiming the propriety of righteousness, in pointing out the necessity of casting up a highway of holiness and making straight the crooked things and establishing righteousness and justice in the earth and thus preparing for the Kingdom of God. By this time, however, we know that this part of the message is too late to effect anything—that matters will go from bad to worse until the fire of the Lord’s anger shall wither the world as the heat of a furnace, and the grass and its flower will fade.

Nevertheless we can assure those who have the ears to hear that the Word of the Lord will stand forever, that He will establish His kingdom of righteousness in the whole earth, and that then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, and that then the blessing of the great Shepherd will be extended to all who will then desire to be His sheep. And while giving this message faithfully as the Elijah class let us be putting in practice in our lives the lessons which we testify to others with our lips, and thus we ourselves will be prepared for a share in the glories of the kingdom, for it is the Elijah class this side the veil who is to constitute the Church in glory, the body of Christ, the bride of Christ; on the other side the veil, through the power of the first resurrection. He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure.