

BIBLE STUDENTS DAY, JUNE 7th, 1915
(From 1915 Convention Report, Pages 166 and 167)

At the Exposition Grounds a Committee of the Exposition Officials met our company at Festival Hall at 1:30 P.M. Director A. W. Scott, Jr. gave a brief address expressing a very hearty welcome to the Bible Students, and to Pastor Russell. To this Pastor Russell responded, on behalf of the Bible Students, expressing our deep appreciation of the hearty welcome extended to us, and briefly setting forth some views of God's great plan, as held by the Bible Students.

Address of Welcome by A. W. Scott, Jr., San Francisco World's Fair Director.

Promptly at one-thirty several hundred delegates of the Bible Students assembled at Festival Hall. After Organist Clarence Eddy had delighted the delegates with the sweet music which flowed grandly and impressively from the great pipe organ at the touch of his deft fingers, Chairman E. D. Sexton introduced Director A. W. Scott, Jr., who welcomed the Delegates in the following words: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, Delegates, Guests:—I want to say on behalf of the Exposition Directorate that we hope you are all our very good friends. I feel that it is a great privilege to address an audience such as this today. We have welcomed many, many groups of people, representing different governments, as our guests to the Grounds, but it seems to me it is a particular privilege to speak to a delegation representing a great civilizing influence, such as brings you here today.

I cannot tell you how fitting it seems to me to see the representatives of your great organization participating in the work of this Exposition. Many have said to us as we have been doing our work, from the time we first took up the harness to the present, "What do you expect to get out of it? What are you doing it for? Why are you giving your time in something that possibly may be a thankless task?" I want to say this privilege of talking to you; this privilege of feeling we belong to you, and you and your great organization belong to us; that we have a part in the things you are working for; that you have the same desire to educate and benefit fellow men—these are the things that go to make up the reward that comes to us for the efforts and toil we have put in, and will still put into the work of this Exposition.

Perhaps you will be able to come with me for a moment into our inner thoughts; really into our inner soul in the matter of this Exposition. You know there is nothing that gives me the pleasure I have in speaking to an audience like this, that I feel will really go down beyond the pageantry, and fun, and tassel of the Exposition. There is a motive in this Exposition far beyond the outward show. You who have been devoting your lives and thoughts to those things which make for the good of your fellows, can understand and appreciate how a few of the citizens of our state have gathered together with the idea of

giving their best of time and effort, that they might be small figures in carrying out a work which the Almighty has planned for this great commonwealth of ours; that they might be units, in working out the destiny which the great Creator has ordained for us. While the nations are battling on the other side, we should be happy that we are given this opportunity of working out something that may tend to the betterment of our fellow men. There is something beyond the educational, something beyond the pleasure that may be experienced, something deep down in this Exposition that has a great civilizing influence which we cannot help but feel.

I am indeed glad to come here and address such a speaker as we have here today; a man whose life is devoted to the betterment of mankind—and to feel that I have a part as a worker in this field, of participating in a work like this. Surely that is a reward sufficient for one individual. In representing our Board I ask you as Delegates, and Pastor Russell as your representative, to accept a small token, a Bronze Medal, commemorative of the occasion.

We are giving it to you that you may have some small, tangible mark of our appreciation of those who, as we do, stand for progress, for the benefiting of humanity, for the aiding of fellow men. We heartily welcome you, and ask that you take this medal away and cherish it, not so much for its value; not so much for the occasion it represents; not so much for the gathering of people as for the great basic truth, the great fundamental principle which we can feel working within us, pushing us onward in the direction of progress and development. We heartily welcome you. I say to you, representing the Exposition Board, our doors are open to you. You belong to us; this is your home. Our house, so far as we have been able to put it in order, is yours. Come and participate with us of the feast. As we do so let us have, as we do, the full measure of gratitude, that full appreciation of our Maker, for the kindness that makes it possible for us to be separate from the strife and battle elsewhere; that enables us to gather in this Exposition, representing the great work of our magnificent nation; representing something we are doing to help man onward and upward to better things.

Response by Pastor Russell

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 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 blessings 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.