

## **"THE ENDS OF THE AGES" – CONDITIONS SIMILAR**

**"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." – John 15:18.**

BY THE word "world" the Lord did not mean Gentiles; else He would have said Gentiles. Had He said Gentiles it would have signified all the peoples not in covenant relationship with God. But when He used the word "world" He seemed to signify the present order of things, and therefore the people of the present order; for there would be no present order except through the people. He would mean those who had religious influence – the representatives of the people.

But the special order of that day was made up of the scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees, chief priests and the Doctors of the Law – those interpreting the Law. Those who represented the Law, and thus represented the people, would have to do with that order of things particularly. We know that these hated the Lord. As He said elsewhere, they hated the light. They hated Him, not because He really did them any harm, but because His teachings, and the light that shone from His life and teachings, were contradictory to themselves, and to their plans, schemes and arrangements. If His words were true, all the plans they had made in all those years would be shown as coming to naught. In proportion as they had confidence in their own plans, Christ and His followers would seem to be fools, trying to do some impracticable thing.

Our Lord's principal opposition, then, came from the religious rulers, the teachers and the Jewish politicians. There were the Sadducee party and the Pharisee party. The Sadducees believed in nothing beyond what they could see. They were agnostics. The Pharisees were a very strict religious sect, pre-eminently the holiness people of the Jews. They were very scrupulous regarding

outward forms and ceremonies, but as a class were very haughty, self-righteous and unjust. Whoever fell in line with Jesus' teachings would not have any particular interest in either of these sects or in their teachings – would not especially respect them and consider them the great ones of their nation. While at variance amongst themselves, these religious rulers were one in their opposition to Jesus.

It was these sects, together with the scribes and Doctors of the Law, who incited the people to crucify Jesus. We are not to suppose that these learned men – men of considerable education and intelligence – got out into the streets with the people and hurraed for Barabbas and shouted against Jesus; but rather that they incited the rabble, and themselves assumed a more dignified line of conduct. At all events, their course led to the Lord's death. Not only did they hate the Master, but they hated Him with such a bitterness and such resentment as to destroy Him. They plotted His death several times, but they could not take Him until His hour had come. The Pharisees acknowledged that a great miracle had been performed in the raising of Lazarus, but they determined that Jesus should be destroyed on account of this great miracle, because it would influence the people, and the people would in that same proportion become alienated from themselves.

The high priest, Caiaphas, said, "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." (John 11:47-53.) The leaders of the nation feared that all the people would be so influenced by Jesus' teaching that they would themselves avail nothing, and that "the Romans would come and take away their place and their nation." They said, "We are the guardians of this nation. The government at Rome would pay no attention to this rabble here. If we fail, God's Cause in the earth will be blotted out. It is therefore expedient that we should destroy this man." The difficulty was that they had a wrong view of God's Cause and of their nation. They were leaving God out of the

account. They were thinking that they must do the whole thing. They were forgetting that God is the One All-Powerful and is at the helm.

## **SHINING OF TRUTH EXPOSES ERROR**

As respects the true people of God the Master said, as recorded in our text, "Marvel not if the world hate you; ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." We see that it is in proportion to their faithfulness as followers of the Lord Jesus that the Lord's people are hated and persecuted. There was a long period of persecution in the early days of the Church – first by Nero, then by Diocletian and others of the Roman Emperors. Then came the general rise of the Antichrist, culminating in the establishment of the great misrepresentation, the counterfeit, of God's Kingdom, in the year 539 A.D. These also hated the true Church and held them in contempt. The latter were chimerical, was the thought – they were poor thinkers, they took the words of Jesus too literally, they thought too much about a future Kingdom instead of about the present kingdom. Then followed the long night of bloody persecutions, during the entire [R5676 : page 132] papal Millennium. [799 A.D. to 1799 A.D.] The true followers were not numerous, and were chiefly the poor of this world – not many great, not many learned – but rich in faith. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" – 1 Corinthians 1:26; James 2:5.

Coming down to our day, in proportion as the people of the Lord are following in the footsteps of Jesus they will wish to let their light shine out upon others. In proportion as they thus let their light shine, it will show the misconceptions and errors of the present order of things in the world. Here in our day as in Jesus' day, Truth shows forth and rebukes the error, and those who

promulgate the Truth are more or less hated because of this. Today, as in the days of our Lord's First Advent, there is a religious System which is more or less mixed up with politics. Its adherents plan all kinds of reforms. They say, "If we can destroy the white slave traffic and the liquor traffic, we shall have nearly brought in the Millennium. Electing wise rulers will help in bringing in the new order of things." But much as we sympathize with these good efforts we perceive that as a whole such plans are not God's Plan in respect to the future Kingdom. Present institutions are not to be repaired, but replaced by the "new heavens and new earth" conditions.

We must not find special fault with reformers, however, and their efforts to put patches upon the old garments. We are to have sympathy for anything that is making for good, for righteousness. We are to leave the world to do the best they can, and we are to give our attention to God's Plan and the great Reform He is to bring in. The instruction to us is that we should get ready for a place in the Kingdom, and should help other children of God that they, too, may make their calling and election sure, and be ready for the Kingdom. That Kingdom, which is now just at hand, will be God's Agency for destroying sin and exalting righteousness.

### **PUTTING DARKNESS FOR LIGHT**

All this seems like a foolish tale to the world; for it would mean defeat to their projects. It would upset all the plans of Churchianity. If the people thought as we do it would mean great disaster to all the denominations. The people would not be nearly so much interested in building up these systems or in raising money as they would be in seeking to do the work of the Lord in the world. If our view should prove true, and should gain the confidence of the people, to that extent all man-made systems would become unpopular. They would all be put to shame in comparison with the Truth. Hence their promoters think that to

hide their darkness and call it light is necessary for their prosperity. They think that it is necessary for them to burn our books and to keep our sermons out of the newspapers, etc. All this seems to them to be the wise course. They perceive that they and their systems would utterly fall if our teachings were generally received by the people.

### **"GREAT, SWELLING WORDS"**

These church systems claim that they have witnessed for Christ's Kingdom for eighteen hundred years. Roman Catholics say, "We have made a great institution! See the millions of money that we have invested! See how much we are in favor with the various governments; and we are hoping soon to get control of all the governments. Then we will conquer the world!" So say the Methodists, the Baptists, and all the rest of them. "We must conquer the world! This is the way the Kingdom must be set up!"

Thus they go about to establish their own plans. When they do study the Word of God, they study it with sectarian spectacles on their eyes; and they think that "the Church" is now in the condition soon to cause every knee to bow and every tongue to confess. They say, "If these Millennial Dawn people go about and tell that there is only a 'little flock' in the true Church, people will remember that we have been boasting of our big flock. What do you say, Roman Catholic flock? What do you say, Lutheran flock? Methodist flock? Baptist flock? Presbyterian flock? Do we not claim that there are four hundred million Christians in the world? Shall we let an insignificant people come around and say that there are only a handful in the Church, and that all the rest of us are frauds? It is an implication that our **[R5677 : page 132]** great institutions are wrong. If these people are going to turn the world upside down, and bring us into disrepute, we must put them down before it is too late. Something must certainly be done!"

## OUR FIERY CHARIOT

So we see there is hatred there. The Lord's true people are striving for a perfect ideal; they are striving for the likeness to the Lord as representatives of our Lord Jesus Christ. But this is not what the religious people hate so much. It is the disturbing of their institutions – the shaking and rocking of their boat. They are afraid that they will be capsized in the sea. It is the spirit of the world in them that hates the Lord's faithful ambassadors. Some of the noble-minded of the world now see somewhat of the Truth. This is the more exasperating to these church people who are not fully in harmony with the Lord.

What this may eventually lead to we do not know. But there are Scriptures which seem to indicate that the closing of the career of the true Church will be one of persecution. We understand that Elijah was a type of the Church. His last experience was his being carried away in a chariot of fire. It was the agency by which he was taken from the world. So in the close of this world (Age) the Lord may take away His people in a fiery trouble – but it will be the chariot to carry them Home, to glory, honor and immortality, to participation with Jesus in the Divine Nature. "Fear not, Little Flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." – Romans 2:7; 8:17; Luke 12:32; 2 Timothy 2:12.

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"In pastures green? Not always; sometimes He  
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me  
In weary ways, where heavy shadows be.  
Out of the sunshine, warm and soft and bright,  
Out of the sunshine into darkest night;  
I oft would faint with terror and with fright,

Only for this – I know He holds my hand.  
So, whether in the green or desert land,  
I trust, although I may not understand.

"So, whether on the hill-tops, high and fair,  
I dwell, or in the sunless valleys, where  
The shadows lie – what matter? He is there.  
And more than this, where-er the pathway lead,  
He gives to me no helpless, broken reed,  
But His own hand, sufficient for my need.  
So, where He leads me I can safely go;  
And in the blest hereafter I shall know,  
Why, in His wisdom, He hath led me so."

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