

PRESENTING THE MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM

"Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house; and if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; but if not, it shall turn to you again." – Luke 10:5,6.

WHEN our Lord Jesus sent forth the seventy to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom, the above words were a part of the instruction which He gave them. He sent them out without special preparation in the way of money or extra clothing. They were to find those in Israel who would have an ear for God's Message then due to be presented – the "Israelites indeed." These would gladly entertain them free of charge. In this respect Oriental countries are somewhat different from those of the Occident. Hospitality is more characteristic of the people of the Far East than of those of Europe and America. This was true of Palestine in the days of Jesus.

When the seventy returned from their mission, our Lord asked them whether they had lacked anything. They replied that they had lacked nothing at all. Jesus had instructed them that their Message was to be a house-to-house Message – not a public one – not given in the streets or in the public squares. The disciples were to go about seeking the worthy of each city which they visited. When they came to a house, they were first to say, "Peace be to this house!" If they were kindly received, their peace was to abide; if not, their peace was to return to them; it should not rest upon that house.

This form of salutation sounds rather peculiar to us; for it is not our custom to use this style of greeting. But it is still customary in Eastern countries to salute one another thus, not only in the houses, but in the street or by the way. People will say to one another, "Peace be to you this morning." Nearly every one salutes, and nearly all say something of this kind. We remember how surprised we were when visiting Palestine first, in 1892. Our guide was well known in that

country; and as we passed along the street people would address him in the Arabic language, and he would reply. We afterwards asked him, "What did they say to you?" He answered that they said, "Peace be unto you;" or, "God's blessing be with you." We were surprised that the people there would so generally speak in this gracious manner. We could scarcely turn into a road without receiving some kind of salutation.

We have something akin to this, however, in our salutation, **[R5979 : page 326]** "Good day," or "How do you do?" or, "We wish you good day," etc. These phrases express much the same sentiment. In the case of Jesus' disciples their salutation was to prove a test to the people as they went from house to house throughout Israel. If they were well received, they were to abide at the house where they had been made welcome, and not change from house to house during their stay in the place. If the people manifested no interest in them or their Message, they were to proceed on their journey. If they should go over a whole city this way, and find no one ready to welcome them, no one to lend an ear as they proclaimed, "The Kingdom of God is at hand," they were to leave the place, figuratively shaking the dust of that city from their feet. If the people said, "Tell us about it," they were to enter the house and tell them about Jesus, His great commission, His miracles, etc. When their Message was delivered, they were to let their peace abide with the family and hasten on their way.

Today conditions are different. To follow the method of the early disciples would not now accomplish the purpose. With us it is much better to take with us some tracts, or to sell to the people at a moderate price some literature, which will stir up their interest and fix it, which will give them the necessary information about the Kingdom soon to be established in a much fuller manner than in the days of our Lord's First Advent. At that time it was to be set up in the hearts of a few; now it is to be set up in power and great glory

over all the earth. We are to go with a Message of peace, however, as did the early disciples – the Message of the Kingdom of Peace.

PROPER DEMEANOR OF GOD'S MESSENGERS

It is not the great Time of Trouble that constitutes our Message. We are to tell the glad tidings of the Gospel which shall be unto all people, and of the Times of Restitution soon to be ushered in. The Time of Trouble, if referred to at all, should be mentioned only as a necessary accompaniment of the change of dispensations because of the world's unpreparedness for the Kingdom and its blessings. As we go along in our work of proclamation, we would very properly keep in mind that we are peacemakers, not breeders of strife and contention. Some of us might be taken for strife-breeders if we were not very careful how we present the Message. We are to seek so **[R5980 : page 326]** far as possible to promote peace, to tell the people about God's love, mercy and goodness. As we do this in love, we find and reach the very class which the Lord now designs to reach. He is not now seeking the froward. He is seeking a special class, the Bride class.

If we are wise, we shall take heed to the special features of the Message. It is a Message of peace and good will. It is to point men in the right direction – that is, those who are of the proper class. The Message is not now for the swinish, for the quarrelsome, for the selfish and wicked. It is for the humble, the teachable, the honest-hearted. If any refuse our Message, we are not to manifest antagonism or bitterness. We are not to say, "Some day you will wish you had heard me!" This is not our business. It was particularly said of our Master that when He was reviled He reviled not again. We are to follow His example in this.

Some might say, "But did not our Lord, when opposed by the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, use very plain language to them? Did He not call them hypocrites, whited sepulchres and vipers?" This is true; but we are to remember that

our Lord Jesus was in a position of authority which we do not occupy. He was perfect, too, "knew what was in man," and could make no mistake in respect to the heart-condition of each of His opponents. This is not true of us. Moreover, when Jesus used this language He addressed a class, and not an individual. When we have presented the Message of the Lord faithfully, we are to feel that we have done our duty; and we should leave the results with the Lord of the Harvest. The Truth itself is a sharp sword, and will do all the cutting necessary. Moreover, it should be the Truth itself that causes the opposition wherever it is found, and not any rudeness or unkindness of word or act on our part. All with whom we come in contact should be able to see by our sweetness of spirit, by our patience under provocation, that we have indeed "been with Jesus" and learned of Him. – Acts 4:13.

The "peace of God which passeth all understanding" should have such control of each one who would represent the Lord and His Message, that a hallowed influence would go with each, especially in every service rendered and every word spoken in the name of the Prince of Peace. The character of His true people is described by the Master Himself. They who would be properly termed the children of God should be peacemakers. He declared that these were blessed. The Apostle Paul also urges, "So far as lieth in you live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18.) It is not possible to live peaceably with all and still be true to the principles of righteousness, but the interests of peace should be conserved in every proper way by the Lord's representatives.

Upon entering any house, our thought should be to do good, to carry blessing, to exercise an influence favorable to the peace, joy and uplift of those within – not by preaching at them, but by simply, unobtrusively presenting our Message. If, as the Lord's ministers, we should be rebuffed and disdained, not welcomed, we should be careful not to intrude ourselves further. In this figurative sense we would wipe off the very dust from our feet, hastening away to find

those whose hearts are hungry for the Word of grace; for if the Truth is properly, lovingly presented, and meets with no response, the Father would not have us violate the proprieties of courtesy by imposing ourselves upon those who are unappreciative. Our Lord set us a good example in this matter.

BEGGING FOR THE LORD NOT AUTHORIZED

The disciples of Jesus who were sent forth to preach the Kingdom Message were not to go from house to house as beggars, to get a meal here and a lodging there; but were to expect that if the Lord had guided them providentially to those who received them, He meant to give their hosts a blessing proportionate to the cost of their brief entertainment. They were not to consider these hospitalities in the light of alms; for as the Lord's representatives they were there to confer blessings greater far than they would receive, and as common laborers even the service they rendered should be worth at least their keep. This principle was to apply not only to a house, but to a city. They were not to be fastidious, but to accept such hospitalities as were proffered them; and if this meant no hospitality, they were to leave the city and go to one where they would be received and their Message given a reasonable hearing. The Lord's servants are not in any sense to be beggars, nor to beg for the Lord.

Verse 9 of the chapter from which our text is taken might at first sight appear to be applicable to the Jewish Harvest only; but not so. There is spiritual as well as physical sickness, and the Lord's ambassadors of today should consider it to be their mission, their business, to open blind eyes, to unstop deaf ears, and to assist the spiritually sick by pouring the balm of Gilead upon bruised and broken hearts. It is proper now, as then, to declare to all people, "The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." This announcement has not been proper all through **[R5980 : page 327]** the Age, but has been appropriate merely in the ends, or Harvests, of the two Ages.

MESSAGE OF TRUTH MAKING A SEPARATION

We have now come to the end of the time which God set apart for the gathering of Spiritual Israel; and the proclamation is now due, Behold, the King is at the door! This Message has been going forth from the Wise Virgins for the last forty years, and has been separating the wise from the foolish. This work is now nearly finished. As in the days when our Lord walked from city to city in Israel, proclaiming the Call of the New Dispensation to joint-heirship in the Kingdom, He declared to the cities that rejected His Message, "It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you" (Matthew 10:15), so we may expect it to be now. Those who have been favored with the Message of Truth and have turned a deaf ear, while still professing to be followers of Christ, and perhaps teaching in His name, will find the conditions of the incoming Age less favorable to them than to heathen peoples who have never heard the true Message of God, the Gospel of the Kingdom, the establishment of which is now very near.

These heathen will probably fall in line with the Kingdom conditions and requirements more readily and with fewer stripes than will those whose hearts have been more or less hardened because of sinning against light and opportunity, and because of refusing to hear and properly weigh the evidences presented to them by the Lord's messengers. Some who in this life have enjoyed high position in the Jewish and in the Christian systems will be greatly humbled in the coming time, when in Christ's Kingdom, judgment will be laid to the line, "and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies" (Isaiah 28:17), and when all evils and deceptions now practised shall be exposed and overthrown. Many then, we fear, will be the stripes that some of these will receive before they are brought into a humble, teachable, obedient condition of heart.

SOME TIMELY WORDS OF CAUTION

In the days or months yet remaining until the completion of our work here in the flesh, let us be worthy exponents of the precious Truth and worthy representatives of Him whose name we bear. There is danger that those who have not been long in the narrow way, and have as yet learned but partially the lessons of meekness, gentleness, patience and love, may not always leave a sweet, helpful influence in the homes which they enter. There is danger that there may be evil-speaking, backbiting, evil insinuations against others, ungentleness of word or conduct, impatience, etc. The influence of such, even though they may be pupils in the School of Christ, is *carnal*, highly injurious to spiritual development, injurious to the growth of the various fruits of the Spirit in themselves and in others who are seeking to walk in the right ways, directed by the Lord in His Word.

How important it is that all who have named the name of Christ, who have entered His School, should apply themselves well to the lessons set for us by our great Teacher! How important it is that we who have made a covenant with the Lord, should walk worthy of our great vocation, and not be a reproach to Him whose Cause we have espoused! There are no people upon the face of the earth who should so exemplify in their daily walk and conversation the precious fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit of God as should those who have been led out of darkness into the marvelous light of the Lord. We believe that we are earnestly desirous of thus glorifying our Lord and of showing Him our gratitude and appreciation for His loving-kindness to us.

The Church is today "as a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid." Much is expected of us, even by our opponents. Much is surely expected of us by our Lord. Then let us be faithful, dear brethren, in word, in act, in all our deportment. Thus shall we honor the name of

our God and of our Savior and King, whom we hope soon to see face to face.

