

Ray Rawson - The Church

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Our speaker for this service is one that falls into a very general category of introduction which usually starts off like, our speaker needs no introduction.

And that's true, but I'm not going to say it because it gives me great pleasure to introduce our Brother Ray Rawson to you this morning, who he's such a fine speaker and has served this convention so faithfully and well in past years. His subject for us this morning is entitled the Church, and I'm sure we'll find it most interesting and a blessing, Brother Rawson.

Thank you, Brother George.

Dear brethren, I also want to be numbered with the ones who begin their little talk by stating how grateful they are and their wives are for being at this convention. Both Sister Sophie and I sincerely appreciate this. A place where that which is eternal, that which praises and glorifies God, exists, and we are benefiting from it.

The thought occurred to me when preparing this talk as to the number of times a discourse was given during the harvest period on this subject, this subject, the Church. I am sure that we couldn't estimate the number of talks that were given, and yet it seems that this subject is still very much in order. We never get tired of it, and then the thought occurred to me how or what it would be like if at the present time, at one of our more larger conventions, each speaker that was to speak at that convention was told, now you are to give a talk on this one subject, the subject the Church.

Well, actually, I think if this was done, it would be surprising to see the wide variety of approaches that would be made on this subject. I am sure that no two talks would be alike, and yet they would all be correct. They would all be proper. Well, today in our discussing the subject, the Church, we want to think of it mainly as it being the desire of God that this church should exist.

Think of it from the viewpoint how God wants this group. You know, I find myself when thinking of God, which we all do continually, more and more I find myself when doing this, realizing really how very little I know about God now. I'm not speaking right now of his daily providences. I'm not now speaking of God's daily care. What I am thinking of right now is God's very being.

I am thinking of God right now as the Supreme Being. I am thinking of God in the terms of having the highest intelligent mind in all the universe. You know, God, as it has been so well explained on this platform, had no beginning. God has no end. God is from everlasting to everlasting.

And the only things that I know about God are what God lets me know. God brings a partial understanding of his image, of his character down to the level that I am on. No one can possibly find God for themselves. No one can learn of God, learn of his character, his attributes, from their own analytical study and their own investigations. No God projects Himself or God reveals Himself to us.

We all of us know God. We know God because we desired to know God, and then God not only lets us know of his character, he lets us know of this character to the extent that he wants us to know of it. But God also lets us know what he expects of us to do with this knowledge, with this understanding. He lets us know what we should do with our time.

Ray Rawson - The Church

But nonetheless, even with this very limited understanding that I have of God's realms, His character and so on, I find myself quite often going back in my mind trying to comprehend that period of time when God created His only begotten Son. Then in the Scriptures we are told that these two beings as a working team brought into existence everything that exists. They brought into existence our universe.

This working team of God and His Son created all the living creatures, the angelic hosts of Heaven. Yes, they created man Himself right here on Earth.

In creating man, which is the lowest level of intelligent beings, he was of course then created in the likeness of God. Now we know all of this about God, this creative work and so on, because God lets us know this. God has revealed this to us, and how is it done? As has also been so well explained in His Word, his mighty and majestic powers and works and so on have been revealed to us in this Word.

And then we get additional confirmation of God's majesty by just looking about us, don't we, right here on this Earth. It's very apparent that only an intelligent being of supreme intelligence could make all this a reality, and when we look into the heavens, we get additional confirmations of God's majesty. You know, I am left absolutely speechless, absolutely dumbfounded when I take into account the creation of just one star of the billions and billions of stars that we know exist, and we've heard a little bit about of their existence. I understand that one of the largest known stars is called Epsilon Orgier.

The diameter of this star is a billion 800 million miles in diameter. If you would draw a line from our Earth to our sun, which is a distance of 93 million miles, you would have to extend that line some 20 times beyond the Sun, and in that area, this one body, this one planet or star exists or consumes that space well now, why was this star created? Why was it so large? Why is the universe so large?

Well, I don't know. There is just so much about God and God's realms that I don't know about. But for those things that God does tell us about in His Word, it leaves nothing to guesswork, and this we feel is, is especially true of God's desire of having a church class. You know, God makes it very plain in this Word that it's his desire that there should be a church class, that God is the one who is selecting a bride for the bridegroom.

And it is God who is watching over the development of this class, and so we would like to use as an opening text and possibly the theme for the rest of our remarks, the 132nd Psalm. We would like to use verses 13 and 14 wherein it says, for the Lord hath chosen Zion. He hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever.

Here will I dwell, for I have desired it. The Lord hath chosen Zion. Now the Lord here is of course Jehovah. It is the self existing one. Jehovah desires.

Jehovah wants the true church. God does not desire this true church in the manner that he desires it because of pity for mankind. Nor is the church class an afterthought on God's part. You know, now that this universe is so big, let's get a little help to sort of take care of it. No, our text says that God desires, or he has always wanted this group so that it could be his rest forever.

It is what he forever is to take supreme delight and supreme pleasure in. Certainly God's desire for his own personal family goes back in time again beyond a point that is beyond our conception. We

Ray Rawson - The Church

get just a little indication of God's thoughts along this line from Scriptures. Like the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth. This scripture indicates that God must have in arranging the teaching of this lesson of sin once for all eternity for all of his intelligent creatures.

It meant then that these creatures who had to become aware of what sin was, that is all creatures that were made in the likeness of God. It meant that God planned that his Son, that his first creation should have a principal role in this event, and this in itself would mean that the bride for the bridegroom was considered at that time. God had always, or shall we say at least God had by this time already done, as our text said, desired, planned for the realm of his everlasting rest. We get positive indication of this from events that developed very Quickly, right here on earth after man sinned, after Father Adam sinned, God said in Genesis 3:15 to the serpent, and I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed, and it shall bruise thy head.

For the seed to bruise. The serpent reveals, or it shows this original desire, and that is that the true church is to be the agent. The first creation is to have a companion, and this group will be God's rest. Now, God's language for the origin of this group, we feel, is quite well expressed in the ninth verse of the fourth chapter of Ephesians when it says there now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lowest part of the earth. That he descended first into the lowest parts of the earth.

Well, when one says the lowest parts of the earth, it's so natural to feel or to think that they're talking about something below the earth's surface. They're talking about being in a mine or in a cave or in the core of the earth, so to speak. But instead of this, God is telling us that the lesson of sin is being taught not just on the last or the lowest plane of intelligent beings, beings that were made in the likeness of God. But we are told that after the beings on this plane fell below even this lowest level of intelligent beings after the fall, God's first creation, God's only begotten Son, descended down to this level, and it is on this level that he paid the price that rescues or it saves everyone that is on it.

But more than this, while he was on this level, he was the forerunner. He was the example. He was, and he set the pattern for the class that God desires to have for his rest for all eternity. Now, the ministry of Jesus as the forerunner and the manner in which he sets this example or this pattern is of course a discourse in itself, is it not?

Now, we like the way that Jesus on just one occasion reveals the intended elevated position of this true Zion class. When he said in John 14:12, he says, Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and he shall do greater works than these.

I better read that again. It says, verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father, ye shall do greater works. Well, what did Jesus do? Well, Jesus gave the message of hope, did he not?

Jesus also healed some that were sick Jesus on different occasions, fed multitudes. He even raised a few from the dead, caused a few that were dead to be alive again. But those that believe, those that are his footstep followers, they shall do greater works. They are the very greatest miracle of all. This group is greater.

The creation of this group is a greater miracle than the creation of angelic life. The creation of this group is a greater miracle than the creation of the human family with its ability of reproducing itself

Ray Rawson - The Church

after its own kind for generation after generation after generation. Yes, the creation of this group is even greater than the creation of that gigantic planet Epsilon or ye, which is 1,800,000,000 miles in diameter. This Zion class that God has planned for for so long, it's now finally taking shape. Jesus here on the scene.

He's setting the standard, the example. He's the very first member, he's the forerunner, and he's letting those who follow after him know what to do. Now, Pentecost was another revelation. The Spirit was now descending down from the head to the shoulders. The descent of the Spirit onto the true church is scripturally spoken of as being an anointing.

It's 1 John 2:27, when it but the anointing which you have received of him abideth in you, and you need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teaches you all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, you shall abide in him. Now. The anointing began at Pentecost for the bride class, and this anointing was pictured by Aaron being anointed for the office of high priest in Israel. You know, when Aaron was in his robes of glory and beauty, oil, the holy oil, was poured on his head, it ran down to his shoulders, it covered his whole body, and finally down to his feet, covering them as well.

And thus, during the Gospel age, the Holy Spirit has descended over all of the called out ones. It has covered all of those who are in this lowest part of the earth condition. But instead of living the same as all of the rest of mankind that Jesus rescues from this lowest parts of the earth, these individuals want the very life that they live while in this lowest part of the earth, they wanted to conform to the example or the sample of life that Jesus lived while he also was in this lowest part of the earth condition, and thus everyone that's been of this heart attitude has come up to, in and under this one anointing. Everyone has come under a single body arrangement wherein no one has a head of his own.

Instead, each one takes on the Master as its head. They come under God's divine care. They come under God's divine providence. They come under this arrangement really for only one main purpose, and that is so that they can be of the resurrected group that God is going to have supreme pleasure and supreme delight in forever and ever. Now, the anointing of the body steadily progressed all through the age.

It progressed up to the point wherein our Lord returned with a shout and the sound of that last trump in the year 1874 and in the harvest, it became very apparent how the anointing had now finally progressed down to the feet. Members, the harvest is the time for the completing of the church, the gathering of the wheat into the barn, and the cry of Revelation 18:4 went out when it and I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of our sins, and that ye receive not of our plagues. Well, they did come out, didn't they? They came out in a way that God really could only direct.

It was a miracle what that coming out was like, and each one that came out was a miracle of grace. As a matter of fact, at that time, it looked like that this class that God had desired for so long, it looked like that this class that God desired even when that lamb was slain before the foundation of the world, it looked like this class was now going to get completed. It was finally going to be made a reality in 1914. You know, if all of us could only just project ourselves back beyond 1914, before 1914, then we would appreciate the realness of this all the more, because at that time it seemed very reasonable.

Ray Rawson - The Church

But of course, 1914 did not see the completion of the church. In fact, 1916 saw the shepherd smitten. It's Matthew 26:31 when it says, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. The shepherd gets smitten and the sheep scatter periodically. It happened in 1916.

And after that I personally heard words, heard words spoken right in my own household by my parents. I heard words like, it looks like never again will Bible students be meeting together. Basically, that is, be meeting together and then basically be using the volumes for their studies. It looks like we'll never again have volume studies, have this as the theme for the gathering of each ecclesia. Well, again, we say we have to project ourselves back in that period of time in order to appreciate what that problem was then.

Because from 1916 on through the 1920s and into the 30s, a good many Bible students shared this view. You know, it was thought really, the Lord almost completed the church. The Lord almost finished what he started way back from before the foundation of the earth. But now it seems there is no hope. No one cares.

What was once truth has now been turned into merchandise and everyone else is like a ship without a rudder. Well, today we can look back at all of this and see how that same powerful being that created this whole universe, we can see how he has continued to pursue his desire of having his class that shall be his rest forever and ever. There was a regathering of Bible students because God's providence continued to control his household. Faithful old timers that wanted to be used, they were used. They were used for the purpose of reassembling Bible students in ecclesia meetings as the order is laid out in the sixth volume of the Studies in the Scriptures.

Today we have these very volumes that God's divine providence provided for all of those people who responded to that cry, come out of Babylon. We have these volumes to use throughout all the world because God's providence made it possible. Certainly there were workers, there were willing workers to bring this about, and these workers worked long and they worked hard. But the important thing to keep in mind is willing workers bear fruit or they yield fruit because God's divine providence blesses their efforts.

Now today we do have the volumes. Today the volumes are being used by the brethren the world over as the basis for their ecclesia meetings, and you know, I wonder how much reflection is made as to just why this is a reality. I feel we are inclined to forget little things sometimes. I was somewhat impressed when browsing through the fifth volume about a little footnote or more or probably a the little foreword that is written in there by the republishers of that volume.

The thought struck me of wondering just how many know that this is even there, let alone knowing the spirit of this little forward. I want to read this foreword. That is in the fifth volume. It reads in the republishing of this book, the Atonement between God and man. The publishers are convinced that they are making available for students of the Bible a veritable treasure house of knowledge on the various phases of the atonement doctrine of the Bible.

At a time when the biblical doctrine of a ransom for all is being challenged by higher critics, evolutionists, and even by former believers, it is particularly appropriate that the bulwark of the faith, once delivered unto the saints, should again be placed in circulation in serving as the republishing agent of the volume, we are happy to acknowledge the cooperation of his many friends throughout the world and to thank them for helping to make possible the undertaking. Sign the publishers. Now. We read this because we feel that it states in the best way possible where

Ray Rawson - The Church

credit should be given, and it reflects the real spirit of thankfulness.

Thankfulness to be used by God as a servant, and yet, in spite of this, right now, right today, some of us are hearing the very same words that were spoken in 1916, 1920 and 1925. It is again being said by some, it was thought that really the Lord almost would complete his church this time. He almost finished that which he started. But now everything has gone wrong.

Everything has gone awry. No one seems to care about the truth anymore. Now the thing that disturbs me most of all in all of these words of discontent, the thing that is most disturbing is how quickly body members. It's how quickly some body members who have come up to, in and under this one anointing can take their eyes off of the one who has desired to have this class even before the foundation of the earth. The responsibility for the structure of the household of faith is God's.

And nothing is out of hand today. Nothing is out of control today any more than anything was out of control on the day of Pentecost. We believe that the Lord has told us through his many servants through the harvest that the acid test of the last remaining saints here on earth would be love. We have heard this over and over. But never, never before did I realize how true this would be until now.

Because the hour that we are living in is the hour wherein it is not enough to know what is right today. It is not enough to just do that which is right. We can know of God's divine plan. We can tell everyone that we know of God's divine purposes. We can tell the world in general that there is a hope for the dead.

And we can do this in some of the most unique ways possible. But this still isn't enough. Paul says it has to be done in the right spirit. It is the reason why we do whatever we do is what counts the most, and you know, if ever, if ever, there was a time that whatever one does, it must be done for God.

For today is that time. It is very apparent that the good works that God started. God is also going to complete this work. The last members are going to get beyond the veil. This class that God had desired for so long is to be a reality.

And for us to be A part of this arrangement. We have got to do what God wants done right now, right today. We can't worry about what was done back in 1874, and really we shouldn't be too concerned what's going to take place in the year 2874. But we should be very much concerned with God's arrangements at this very moment.

Now, some of the things that are very apparent that we should not be doing now, some of the things that would be absolutely incorrect to be doing now would be spreading seeds of discord. We should not be spreading seeds of division. We are told in the Bible that many will seek followers after themselves rather than directing them to follow the Lord. These words, they have been spoken before. You know these words and you have heard them many times, and undoubtedly you are going to hear them some more.

But what you don't always hear is the added warning, and that is we firmly believe that this does not have to happen. It is not inevitable that people have to have followers. Brethren do not have to polarize. They do not have to struggle as to who is in charge.

Ray Rawson - The Church

This isn't a must. We do not have to leave our name, shall we say, at the bottom of any and everything that we do that we feel is in the name of the Lord, and then if this isn't bad enough, then there's always those innocent victims in this struggle of the brethren trying to outdo one another or trying to show by example what is right. But instead it seems that in this era the real spirit is always lost. The innocent victims are the ones that don't have an axe to grind.

As a matter of fact, they are the ones who suddenly find out that some of the very ones that they thought were advocates of building Christ likeness while they are not meeting with the majority of the brethren, and there doesn't seem to be any reason for this. The innocent victims are the ones who really don't know what is happening and they can't understand why some that they knew and loved yesterday, they no longer are fellowshipping in the same manner as always before, and they've gone elsewhere. The innocent victims are being tormented with verbal appeals, written appeals, and what have you of Come meet with me. Meet with me now.

Our answer to all of this, brethren is we really believe that divine providence can repair everything. Because the only ones that are going to get on the other side of that veil, the only ones that are going to be of the glorified body, are the ones that do copy Jesus today. They copy Jesus in all things and in all ways, and in this hour of temptation, when the spirit of why we do whatever we do means more than even the fact that we preach what is right and we do what is right, well, in this hour again we say God is still completely in control of finalizing this class that he is to have forever and ever as his rest. Now it's only natural for the question to exist, at least by some today.

What should we be doing? What is right? Who should I be fellowshipping with?

Well, the best way for the Lord's people to know what God wants done tomorrow is to take note of his providences of yesterday. Our best evidence of knowing what we should be doing today, what we should be engaged in right at this here present moment, and what we should be looking forward to in activities in the Lord tomorrow. This comes from recognizing what God has blessed in the past. Now, God's hands in the affairs of his people can be traced not just from 1874 on through to 1914, but it can be traced through every decade of the 20s, the 30s, the 40s, 50s and 60s. Yes, this hand of his directing the affairs of his people can be traced to the very moment wherein we're sitting in this room right now, today, this morning.

Because every one of us who are of this household came to this convention for one main reason. The Lord's here. The Lord's spirit is here. What does that mean? That means that what he wants us to know, that what he wants us to do, that what he wants us to be engaged in is being brought out and we can get eternal helps, eternal lessons at gatherings such as this.

Now, all that want while they are still in this lowest parts of the earth condition, all that want to copy Jesus example that he left while he was also in this same lowest parts of the earth that want this, they can get this and they can do this, and then more than that, they can even do these greater works that Jesus referred to in that 14th chapter of John and the greater works that these last remaining saints on this side of the veil are able to do. We aren't thinking of just that which is going to be done in the resurrection of all mankind and things that will go on forever and forever in the body that God is going to everlastingly have rest in. But we are thinking that right now greater works are being done because so much is done with so little. We seen very good examples of that Saturday night in the film, did we not?

He that has begun a good work in you is going to complete it without any hesitation if you submit to his will. May the Lord add his blessing.

Ray Rawson - The Church

The fine lesson 38, number two.

Jesus may share thy people's bar. May we share thy people.