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THE LAST PRAYERMEETING

By Seth Cook Rees

A Sermon Preached by Seth C. Rees
At Salvation Park Campmeeting,
Cincinnati, Ohio, June, 1904

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ABOUT THIS DIGITAL PUBLICATION

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THE LAST PRAYERMEETING

By Seth Cook Rees

Scripture Reading:

"And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became as black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.

"And the stars of Heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

"And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

"And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

"For the great day of His wrath is come and who shall be able to stand." -- Rev. 6:12-17.

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This opening of the sixth seal is the announcement of the last great prayermeeting that will ever be held the largest prayer meeting in all the universe. It is the announcement of the time when vast multitudes will come together; multiplied millions will assemble, the nations of the earth with their kings, and princes, anti lords, and governors, and sheriffs, their senators, and congressmen, representatives, their mighty millionaires, their men of strength, men of renown, prize fighters, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the black and the white, all classes will assemble together at one great prayer meeting.

Prayer meetings are about the smallest meetings that are held now. There are very few who go to prayer meeting. It is a very rare thing if a king ever comes, but there will be kings at this one. Presidents and governors do not often frequent the prayer room, but they will be present on this occasion. Millionaires seldom go to prayer meeting now, but they will be there. The nobles of earth, the men that the nations bow down to, will all be at prayer meeting. That will be a great day.

A great many people have thought that this occasion would be an assembly largely of the poor, of the bums and thugs and harlots and outcasts of earth, but it will be a vast assembly of respectability. The representatives of our great institutions of learning will be there. All infidels, all Universalists, and all those who propagate heresy, theosophy, Christian Science, and everything else that is antagonistic to the Bible. Representatives of Harvard, Yale, Amherst, Brown, Oxford, the great institutions of learning that nearly everybody thinks are so wonderful will be at prayer meeting. The Bible says so. The Bible is true. The poor will be there, slaves will be there, outcasts of every description.

That will be a vast assembly where men will pray. There are not many people who know how to pray now. The most of the pastors have a very few people whom they can classify as "praying members." These are times when our institutions called "religious" have active and non active members, praying and non praying members. Many a pastor of a congregation of three or four hundred members could count all his praying members on the fingers of one hand, and would hardly dare to call on a man publicly to pray for fear he would decline. These are days when people want to hire a man to pray for them, and they are satisfied with a substitute, but, sir, there is a day coming when they cannot hire a man to pray for them. Everybody will be occupied. There will be no way to secure any assistance. Everybody is going to pray. There are a great many people who do not believe in prayer, but everybody will believe in it then. Everybody will be engaged in it then. We have some very boastful people in these days who say

they do not believe in prayer, but they will believe in it then. They will drop on their knees and call for help. Beloved, do you know that there are times in this world when the most infidel and the most God-hating pray? Sometimes they are loath to confess it, but they do. If you are here tonight, under this tent, I want to say to you, Sir, the time will come when you will pray. Men's hearts fail them for fear, and they do pray. Men profess to be atheists, they profess to deny Christ but they have had their secret times of praying, and certain circumstances bring their prayers to the public. I have been in a few places where people pray.

I was on the train one day when it left the track and took to the ditch. That is a place where people always pray.

I was in a cyclone once; that is a place where people always pray.

I have been in a storm at sea; that is a place where people always pray. There are times when the most brave, and courageous and God-defying, fall on their knees and pray.

A few years ago I lived in a Hoosier city where some bankers and business men were most defiant and said they did not believe in prayer. They never prayed. One sultry afternoon about two o'clock it appeared to everybody who had any sense that in about three minutes a cyclone would strike the city. Some of those bankers were in the street, and they fell on their knees on the sidewalk and prayed and cried to God to spare the city.

When God pressed a button and shook Charleston, S. C., just a little a few years ago, just enough to let people know that He is God, brave men, courageous men, defiant men fell in the street and cried to God. Men that said there was no God, called upon His name for mercy.

I was walking along the streets of Chicago one morning, when suddenly two elevated trains, just over my head, came together with an awful crash. Pieces of the wreckage fell on the street about me, and I heard screams and cries and groans. I ran upstairs and they were carrying out the wounded and dying, policemen were there with tearful eyes and white faces, the patrols and ambulances were there, everybody was screaming and crying and praying. It was a time to pray.

You may say tonight that you are not going to that altar, that those fanatics cannot get you, but sometime you will pray. You may not be in a railroad wreck, you may not be in a cyclone, you may not be on your death-bed, you may never have a death bed, you may be launched into eternity without a moment's warning. But there is coming a GREAT PRAYER MEETING that you will attend. You will be there with the vast assemblies of the nations that have forgotten God, and you will join in that awful hour, in prayer.

To some of us these things are very real; we believe them most fully; they impress us most profoundly. To some of us it seems awful for people to sin against God. To some of us it seems appalling for people to be damned and go to hell right under our noses. Some of us are concerned, deeply concerned lest somebody should slip through our fingers to a devil's hell. God help us to be at our very best for Him, to be at our very best in saving the lost. I have seen enough people die and go to hell to make me know that hell is awful, hell is real. I have seen

enough people die testifying with their last breath that they were damned in hell forever so that I do not want to be present any more when people die without God, without hope. O sir, I have seen some of the very classes spoken of in my text. I have seen them stand on the every threshold of eternity and declare they were lost, lost! lost! forever. Ordinarily you believe what people say when they are dying. Ordinarily you expect people to tell the truth in such an hour as that. I have seen enough people die telling me they were going to hell to make me know it is perfectly awful, and to me the loss of damned souls in the infernal city is something as real as salvation, as real as Heaven. It is awful beyond comparison; it is awful beyond description. God help us to see it tonight.

I saw a rich man die; at least one who had been a rich man; a man who had been looked up to a man who held the respect of everybody far and near. He was a man whose friendship was coveted. People thought it was something worth having to have his acquaintance end friendship. I saw him under conviction. I saw him in a great revival meeting where there were two thousand people and where six hundred were seeking God at one time. I heard preachers talking to him. His pious wife plod with him to turn to God. But he had money; he had influence; he had friends who had money, and the world seemed to be his god. He turned away from that great revival, that great outpouring of grace, unsaved. He turned away to eternal darkness. Some months later his money was gone, his friends had failed. The Doctor drove by one night and said, "Mr. Rees, our friend is dying, won't you go over and see him? The doctor was unsaved himself, but he was not willing to see that man go into eternity unprepared with nobody to pray for him. We drove to his home -- a beautiful home -- and entered his chamber. I found him in the very jaws of death. At the first sight of him I saw that his chance was gone; his case was hopeless; but for the sake of his heart-broken and screaming wife, for her pleading I bent over him and said, "My brother, can you pray?" Sir, I am telling you the honest truth, he whispered to me, "when I attempt to pray, hell is pressing me down." He dropped his hand on his chest, and in a short time he was dead. Sir, if ever I felt the Holy Ghost in a meeting, if ever I felt the presence of the angels near when a saint was going home to Heaven; on this occasion I felt the presence of black-winged demons in that chamber of death to convey his damned spirit to the confines of eternal despair.

I saw another representative of the class mentioned here, die, I saw a merchant die; a merchant that had run his course of success, and had accomplished his purpose in the world as far as anybody could see, but he was without God and without hope. He listened like men listen tonight. He heard the Gospel message again and again. He was invited to come to Christ, but he rejected him. I remember the day he dropped into hell. One of my most saintly members felt Divinely impressed to call upon him and warn him to flee the wrath to come. She went and delivered the message and gave him the warning. He was not disrespectful, but he treated the subject with indifference, and turned away to his merchandise. My saintly sister walked about five blocks when somebody came running after her. In the meantime I was sitting at my table only half a square away from his home when I heard a scream, something I knew was not earthly. I was the first into his place of business, and the only one present when he died. He dropped on the floor and in less than two minutes was in hell, and I want to say to you, Sir, that the presence of damned spirits was so real to me for hours and for days that I said to my wife, "I do not want anybody to die and go to hell again so near our house." It seemed to me the very atmosphere was loaded with brimstone for days. You may call it imagination, but to some of us it is very real. It will be real to you someday. There is a God, there is a Heaven, there is a devil,

there is a hell. Sin is sin, and sin is awful. Life without God is awful, and as sure as God is God, people that die without Christ and salvation, even if they are your own children, even if they are my dear relatives, will be damned in hell forever. It is folly to conclude that all our relatives are going to Heaven. If everybody's relatives are going to Heaven we had just as well quit preaching. Your children are in danger. Your friends and relatives will be damned in hell forever unless they are saved through Jesus Christ.

I have seen a church member die. Church members will be there in great numbers. This woman was a member of my congregation during the two years of my pastorate at that place. She was not a young woman, she was eighty years old. She was not in sympathy with revivals, she had never helped us in one. She had been a member of the church for eighty years. You may be a member of the church tonight, you may be a preacher of the Gospel, and be damned in the pit forever. I warn you tonight. Church membership, the ordinance of baptism or any other ordinance, resolutions of self control or any other kind will never save you. It will take the blood of Jesus Christ and the fire of the Holy Ghost to take sin out of your being so you can escape hell. This woman's daughter sent for me; I hurried to their home. It was the best home in the community. People think if they can get a little money together and have something to leave to their children they have done well. Do you know, Sir, the people from the best homes in this country, the most of them are on their way to hell? Those who have the finest homes, the best families on our Boulevards and Avenues, many of them are on their road to a devil's hell, because they reject Jesus Christ, God's only Son, and the sinner's only hope. The Lord help us to not get carried away with a lot of folderol about good people being saved without salvation. Good people are not saved because they are moral. It is salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ alone, or damnation in hell forever.

I entered the house and she looked at me as she walked the floor, and wrung her hands and said "I am lost, I am lost." My first thought was that it was the Spirit awaking her, and I told her she was just the kind of people that Jesus came to save, but she said, "No, it is too late; I might have been saved but I am lost. The Spirit warned me and exhorted me and pined with me, and I said 'no.'" And she walked the floor all that day, and all that night, and wrung her hands and said, "I am lost!" She ate no supper, she ate no breakfast, but walked the house all the next day, wringing her hands and tearing her hair. She was a fine old Quaker lady more than eighty years old, in good health, in good use of her mental powers, but she walked the house day and night, wringing her hands and saying, "I am lost!" I tried to pray, but the heavens wore brass. I could not get a petition through. She walked the house day after day and night after night until she was too weak to walk, then she sat back in an arm chair, and wrung her hands, and said, "I am lost!" I visited her, but could not stay. Her relatives could not stay. Her daughter said she could not stay and listen to her screams. They had money, they hired somebody, but they would not stay. You say people will do anything for money. No Sir, they will not. There are some things people will not do for money. They would not stay and see that old lady tear her hair, and hear her scream and say the devils were after her. So people came and went, and when she got so weak she could not sit in the chair, they laid her on the bed, and she wrung her hands and said, "I am lost." She did not eat, she did not sleep, she was not sick, her voice grew weak, and then she whispered, "I am lost, I am lost." I am telling you a positive fact when I tell you that her own people had to leave that house. They could not endure the screams and cries of a good church member, that she was going to hell. If one damned soul can make it like that on this earth, what

will it be when the multiplied millions are assembled together to pray at this last great prayer meeting? O, it is AWFUL!

I tell you, people are dying all about us. In every campmeeting we hold somebody has their last chance, somebody says "no," and goes to hell. Every convention and revival we have people cross the dead line. Some say "yes", and get gloriously saved; others say "no," and the door of mercy swings shut forever. May God help us in this campmeeting. Somebody will say "no" to the pleading of the Spirit, the door of mercy will close, they will cross the dead line and never have another chance. It may be the giggling girl at the outskirts of this tent, it may be some who have not sense enough now to behave when they go to church, but, Sir, they will know enough to pray, they will know enough to call for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him who sitteth in the Throne. I may be preaching your funeral sermon now, young lady. I would not be surprised if there was somebody under this canvas who are nearing their doom. What I am saying to you is as real as death is real.

Not very long ago I preached to a man in middle life, a man in good health, a man full of vigor. He sat in the audience, he had opportunities just like you are having. He said "no." He came to church Sunday morning when thirty-five young people fell at the altar and gave their hearts to God. That man back in the pew just a little way said, "No, not tonight," and when he said it the door of mercy closed, and he crossed the dead line. The pastor of the church was a most godly man. As I sat at dinner with him that day he said, "Brother Rees, I had such strange feelings about George -- today. I would not be surprised, when I go to Sunday School at 2:30 this afternoon if somebody would meet me and say, "Pastor, George P____ is dead." The way he said it made us feel strange. Half or three quarters of an hour later when he went to the church, the first man that met him said, "Pastor, George P____ is dead." He crossed the dead line, he had his last chance and dropped into the pit.

I was preaching to a woman some time ago who said "no," to God at half past nine o'clock at night, and at eleven o'clock she was dead and in hell. O sir, these things are real, and these people are going to be there at the judgment day, at the last great prayer meeting; People that are trifling with mercy, trifling with grace, trifling with their soul's eternal interests.

At one of the campmeetings I was holding there was a band of boys who made disturbance, and one after another of the leaders of that disturbance dropped into hell. The ring leader was a preacher's son. He was crossing the track one day when a lightning express struck him and he was in hell in a second's time. O, I have seen these things. I have heard them. I have been called to preach funerals until I am no more a funeral preacher. I do not believe much in preaching funerals unless you are sure the ones who have gone have died in Christ. O, Sir, I have heard the screams of wails of dying men. I do not want to preach the funeral of a man that has gone to the bottomless pit. I do not want to preach your funeral, even if you are a professor of holiness unless you have exemplified the Spirit of Christ in your life.

In the state of Michigan, there was a young man who listened to the Gospel message, and said, "I will not give God my heart tonight." He retired at the usual hour, and the next morning when he did not make his appearance, his younger brother took a stick and said, "I will see if I can stir him out." But he was stiff and cold; he had been in hell for several hours. It does not pay

to turn away from God. It does not Day to reject Christ. It is an awful thing to refuse light. How this campmeeting will settle destinies. How it will fix things! Thank God, some folks are getting them fixed for God and Heaven.

Brother Pennington will remember a revival held in our own county. The power of God was felt over all. There was great conviction, drunkards were saved, profane people quit swearing, many were saved and sanctified. There were six sawmen in the community, all godless men. They attended the meeting and sat on the back seats of that Quaker church and listened to the truth. They heard warning after warning, and the Spirit strove with them in mighty power. One night three of them made a lunge for the altar and got saved, and went away rejoicing in God. The other three rejected Christ, and turned away. The next day at eleven o'clock there was a boiler explosion, and those six men were hurled into eternity in a second's time. Revivals do settle destinies.

You may not pray tonight, you may not pray tomorrow, you may not pray for ten years, no sudden calamity may overtake you, but sometime you will pray. You may pray when it is too late. The most of people are not going to pray to God, or to Jesus, but to Pike's Peak, and to Long's peak, to the Alleghenies and the Blue Ridge, to the Green Mountains and the White Mountains, to the Cumberland Mountains; they will pray for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him who sitteth on the Throne. It will be an awful time. The presence of God will be worse than hell to the unprepared. Sir, the time is coming when the pale sheeted nations of the dead are going to get up out of their graves, the vaults will surrender their great deposits, the sea will give up her dead, the ashes at Ashtabula will stand, the steamer that went down with four hundred and fifty on board, -- those people will all come up out of the water, and all around this world the dead will arise, and the unsaved will be there on the last day to pray this prayer. Will you be there

One of the saddest things that impresses me is that all hypocrites, and false professors of holiness will be" there. People that have been deceived, and deceiving others, those that have gone off into fanaticism, the people that have exhibited self when they thought they were exhibiting Christ, professing everything and as empty as a barrel -- they are going to be there. A profession will not keep you out of hell. You have got to have the real tiling. Some people say, "If I go to hell I will have lots of company. That will not be any satisfaction to you. There will be no worldly pleasures there. Everybody will be busy. Nobody will have any time to pay any attention to you. It will be as awful for you as if you were alone, away out a thousand miles from anybody. It will never be any consolation to you that other people have gone to hell. God help us tonight to see the awful reality of being damned without salvation, of being lost in hell forever.

Kings, and priests, and false prophets, and brewers, and saloon keepers, and bums, and thugs, and harlots, and poor people, and rich people, and black people, and white people, will be there. If you want to escape, come to God.

All that I am, and all that I enjoy in society I owe to Christ. That is one thing I can never get through praising God for. He has brought me into society that I thoroughly enjoy. I am never at any loss to know my own people, and I never have the slightest hesitation in recognizing them, no difference where I go. I thank God for saving me from sin and from hell, for saving me

from tobacco, from profanity, from Sabbath desecration and other things that are sinful. How I thank God that I do not have to be at that last great prayer meeting, but while it is being held there will also be a vast praise meeting, and I expect to be in attendance.

Sometimes we almost pray ourselves sick. Our dear girls who are working in the slums, pray themselves almost into nervous prostration, but it is not in vain. The strain on the nervous system that people go through for lost souls is perfectly indescribable, as they endeavor with all their power to pull men and women out of the fire.

After awhile when people are calling for rocks and mountains, we will be shouting we will be going through the air with Jesus Christ, to live and reign with Him FOREVER.

I want to tell this dying congregation that you do not have to go to this prayer meeting I have announced; but you can pray, and cry, and make wrongs right and crooked things straight, and God will save your soul, and you will begin to praise Him, and you will be at the last great praise meeting. God help you tonight to turn away from sin, and turn to God and seek salvation.

How many in this audience without the shadow of a doubt are saved and sanctified, and sudden death would be sudden glory?"

An awful solemnity was over the great congregation, as he concluded. It was a solemn moment, all who were sure they were ready for the great judgment day were asked to stand. Hundreds arose and when those who wanted to get ready were asked to stand, and to press their way to the altar, scores came, and a mighty season of prayer followed in which many found peace.

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THE END