

The Gospel Witness

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"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Romans 1:16.

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The Editor Says, "Merry Christmas"

CHRISTMAS is here *again!* Or is Christmas here *yet?* There is a vast difference between the two conceptions: one is occasional, the other continuous; one is annual, the other everlasting. The first is pagan: the other is Christian.

The first conception would relegate the beginning of Christianity to a point of time, and give to it a distinct geographical colour. The other conceives Christianity as timeless, having "neither beginning of days, nor end of life"; and ascribes to it a celestial rather than a terrestrial origin. When one speaks in terms of history, he says in the words of Holy Writ, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king"; but when we speak in terms of Christian experience, which is but a verification of history, we say, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

Thus it is not strictly true that Christmas comes but once a year. All that the advent of the Son of God signified to preceding generations who had awaited the fulfilment of the promise of His coming; all that it meant to those who companied with Him during the days of His flesh, and, having witnessed the infallible proofs of His resurrection for forty days, saw Him return in clouds to heaven; all that the parenthesis of His eternal existence which was marked by His birth and ascension meant to those who saw the tongues as of fire, and received the Holy Ghost—all that, and nothing less than that, His advent means to the world to-day, and all the days, and forevermore. Our Santa Claus saith, "I am with you all the days." And oh, how a bankrupt world needs Him still! Even He said, "Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God?" And of Himself the Eternal said, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One." Notwithstanding, He called Himself a Bridegroom, a Vine, a Husbandman; and defined Himself and His ministry under many figures. Then shall we say, Christmas is come again? Shall we not rather say, Christmas is with us yet.

Picture a squalid tenement-house. The floors are bare; the bed-rooms are wretched and uninviting; the kitchen shows little sign of use, and is empty and chilly; the pantry is empty too, and what was once called the dining-room seems now never to be occupied. The temperature of the house is almost winter; the cellar is empty of fuel; and but a few coals burn dimly in a rusty stove. Mother and children are ill-clad, cold, and hungry. But there is another room. "That is locked", the children say, "and Daddy has lost the key." Ah, but is there anything in that room? Would it be worth while looking for the key, or trying to fashion another one? Suppose we could somehow look within? Wonder of wonders! the room is full to the ceiling with all good things. It looks like Santa Claus' headquarters. Everything the rest of the house lacks, is there in rich abundance—food, warmth, comfort, luxury, means of merriment, wealth of all sorts in indescribable abundance.

This is but a poor parable of life. Christ has not only come, but *He is here.* He has not only enriched, but *He enriches.* He not only shed light in the past: *He is light.* He not only gives life: *He is life itself.* Under the same roof with all our poverty, He abides. He is within arm's length of our utmost need: salvation for the soul, succour for the body, life and felicity eternal. Hast thou lost the key, hungry soul? Here it is: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Thus we wish you a Merry Christmas.

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING?"

A Sermon by the Pastor, Dr. T. T. Shields

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Christmas Morning, Tuesday, December 25th, 1934

(Stenographically Reported)

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."—Matt. 2:1, 2.

Prayer before the Sermon

Help us, O Lord our God, as we approach Thy throne this morning by the ministry of Thy gracious Spirit, to come to Thee as we ought. We thank Thee for the occasion which brings us together. We bless Thee that Thou hast come in the Person of Thine only begotten Son, that there has come to this earth One of Whom it may truthfully be said: He came down from above. We rejoice that so many of us know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. We thank Thee that He Who was born in Bethlehem now reigns on high; that He Whom the wise men worshipped, may still be worshipped in spirit and in truth by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit.

As we meditate upon this great truth this morning, may the Spirit of God minister the truth to our own hearts; that Jesus may be vastly more to us than a Figure of history, or a Character in a book, or merely an Ideal to be cherished by men. Thou hast come to us in Thy living, saving, power, O Lord. Thou hast walked with us, and we have walked with Thee. Thou hast permitted us to hold converse with the King, and Thy hand has been stretched out in our behalf, saving us, keeping us, preserving us, providing for us through all the years. We thank Thee that the Lord is come, and that earth may receive her King. May every heart in this assembly this morning prepare Him room, while heaven and earth shall sing.

We thank Thee, O Lord, for all the grace which has come to us as individuals. We thank Thee for Thy multiplied lovingkindnesses with which Thou hast blessed the children of men; and throughout the world as countless millions turn aside from the ordinary affairs of life to give thought to this great truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, we pray that people may be blessed; that multitudes may be saved. And here in this service this morning, make us specially aware of the nearness of God. We can do nothing without Thee. It may be that some have come depressed in spirit; it may be that there are some even on this Christmas-morning whose hearts are heavy, who are, indeed, wrapped about with a spirit of heaviness, to whom this day brings but little brightness. We would listen this morning to the angels' music; may the good tidings of great joy sung to all people reach us, every one. Help us to view life in the light of Thine advent, and to rejoice in Him Who is the Lord indeed.

It may be there are some here this morning who need special grace, who need to be undergirded by the very might of God Himself. We thank Thee that Jesus Christ is more than sufficient. We bless Thee for His sovereign power, for His abounding grace; not alone for His birth in Bethlehem, but for His birth from the grave, His resurrection from the dead in which He spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, and triumphing over them in it.

Graciously bless us, O Lord, that as we sing these hymns of praise this morning our hearts may really adore Thee. Bless the land, we pray Thee, in which we live, and all who rule over us. Strengthen the arms of those who would do right, and contend against those who would do wrong. Bless the Empire to which we belong the world around in many climes. Vast numbers of people to-day recognize Jesus as Lord. Let Thy blessing rest upon them all. Bless him who reigns over us. We thank Thee, O Lord, for the influence of the Crown. We thank Thee for His Majesty King George, and for the royal family. We bless Thee that we have reason to believe that in the palace Jesus is recognized as the

King of kings. And as Thou hast been pleased to use the Empire in days past for the furtherance of righteousness in the world, so continue graciously to abide with us, and give us, if it please Thee, peace in our time, O Lord.

Now cause us to know that Thou hast fulfilled to us Thy gracious promise that where two or three are gathered in Thy name there Thou art in the midst. May we all know it this morning, for Thy name's sake, Amen.

"Where is he that is born king?" The wise men mentioned in the text, were wise in a deeper and truer sense than the Magian sense in which the word is here employed. Truth that is truth indeed has universal relationships. Truth is never fragmentary, segmentary: truth is related to truth everywhere. Truth is never self-contradictory; and it is because the gospel is true that it is always at home among all peoples, and in all ages. The religion of Christ is a universal religion because it is the religion of the universal King. The gospel, it is true, is a dynamic. It is the power of God unto salvation; but it is a power which operates through a system of principles which are eternal, and which constitute the very fabric of human life.

There are words in every language which become obsolete. Look at your dictionaries, and you will find some marked "archaic", which means that they are rather ancient, seldom used now; and others are marked "obsolete", which means they no longer belong, properly, to human speech.

But the Word that was made flesh will never become obsolete in any language. It belongs to the whole human race and to all ages of human history. The speech of the gospel will never wear out. I delight to observe that the gospel of the Lord Jesus in any aspect is never arbitrary: it is always founded in some deep necessity. It belongs to the essence of things; it is founded in the nature of things. Even the simplest statements of Scripture are profoundly, philosophically, true.

I.

Here is a question asked by the wise men, and wise as they were, they asked it without themselves recognizing, I dare say, its full significance. Their great question is: "Where is he that is born King?" Where is this Personality that has come into this world of human affairs, endowed by nature with qualities, with potentialities, which will make him a Ruler among the people. Let us look at THAT SIMPLE AND YET PROFOUND PRINCIPLE FIRST OF ALL AS WE ASK AGAIN THIS QUESTION: Where is He that is born King?

Was there ever a king worthy to wear a crown who did not derive that worthiness primarily from His birth? They who are really kings are born kings; they are what they are, not because of any "accident of birth": there is no accident of birth. Whatever men are, they

are, could we but understand it, by virtue of the qualities which are inherent. You remember our Lord said: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Great as was Solomon, glorious as were the qualities of his mind, and splendid as were all the pomp and circumstance of his position, yet it was, in a sense, external to the man. But the beauty of the lily was a thing that was inherent. It outshone the king because it was born so to display its beauty. I am not now speaking of the externals of life. I recognize that a clown may be born in a palace, and a king may be born in a cottage or in a stable, as in the case before us. My insistence is that the inherent qualities of kingliness, wherever they are found, will be discovered to be an endowment of birth, and are never acquired, nor possessed by any effort of the human will.

This principle finds abundant illustration in human life. If you look at the record of the leaders of human thought, and effort, and achievement, you will find that they were all born kings; and all they became and accomplished was really due to some native quality, to some potentiality of blood. However disciplined or developed those qualities may have been, they were natively resident in the man, or he never could have developed them. Turn the pages of history and look at the conspicuous figures there, look at the characters in this history. Such a man as Moses, for example, was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in word and in deed! "Oh", says somebody, "but was he not a product of education? Send the schoolmaster abroad and you will have plenty of people like Moses." Oh, no; the Bible goes to the heart of the matter, for when describing a certain dark day, it says, "At which time Moses was born." Yes; there came into the world by divine act, certain potentialities which, in the course of time, were to be enlarged and developed, and which were to determine the course of civilization. There are characters in profane history which we do not admire, but which we cannot ignore. Look at the most conspicuous military genius of all time—Napoleon Bonaparte. Born in obscurity, he attained to an imperishable, though unenviable, fame. I suppose the world has never seen the military equal of Bonaparte. But one cannot study his history without recognizing that in some strange way he was a man of destiny, that those powers which were in him, and which he developed—we grant you they were all disciplined and directed toward a particular course; but they were there because they were born in him.

Look at another character, Abraham Lincoln, of very humble birth also. Yet he came to be called by men "the President", and later "The Great Emancipator". But all the powers that made Abraham Lincoln what he was, that enabled him to do what he did, were born with him. Who shall deny that he was one of nature's own kings, born to the kingdom for such a time as that in which he lived?

Look at the realm of literature. Study the case of Bunyan. How can you account for this "tinker out of Bedford" as Kipling calls him? "The immortal dreamer" as all the world delights to name him? Whence that incomparable imagination? What school on earth can reproduce John Bunyan? None. He was so born.

One might speak also of the poets. Look at Burns—I do not admire him as a man. I always feel like apolo-

gizing for mentioning him; and yet he was marvellous as a poet. He could no more help singing than a canary. He was born doing it—with music in his soul. And that is true of all music, whether it be of speech, or sound, or colour—the great determining factors in the lives of men are always, in the ultimate analysis, the issues of birth. People wonder to-day at the world's chaotic condition. We lament the mediocre character of the best of men. People pull long faces and say that in the realm of statesmanship we have few great men. True: but our great men were slain in the war! Has it occurred to you that the men who ought to have been leaders and commanders of people in nearly all realms of human endeavour—many of them at least—were destroyed by the Great War? We speak of so many millions of lives. Yes; but the whole world was irreparably impoverished by the elimination from human affairs of those tremendous potentialities that but for the war might have blossomed into great characters in church and state and everywhere, that would have brought blessing to the world. No; kings must be born: you cannot make them. You may discover a king as Samuel discovered Saul when he hid among the stuff, or as he later discovered David while he was still keeping his father's sheep. But Saul was a king before Samuel found him, and the majesty and power of the ruddy lad called David, was acknowledged by the brute creation—lion and bear bowed down before him before even his father and his brethren recognized him. He was a king, so born. You cannot make a kingdom, and fashion a king to rule it unless nature, and, back of that, God has laid His ordaining and pre-determining hand upon the man, and brought him into the world to be a king.

II.

These are simple, self-evident, truths, and WE SHOULD EXPECT TO FIND THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION IN HARMONY WITH THAT FUNDAMENTAL AND INDISPUTABLE PRINCIPLE OF TRUTH. And so it is: "Where is he that is born king?" Let it never be forgotten that *Jesus Christ was born to be king*. Ah, I fear that our gospel has been stripped of much of its power, our glorious Samson has been shorn of His locks by modern thinking, and we are disposed to speak of the disclosure of God in Christ as though it were not a revelation, but a human discovery of divine benignity, benevolence: "God is good"; "God is love"; "God is compassionate". How much we speak of the manger and of the stable, and of the little Child!—and we cannot speak of these too often, nor emphasize the principles which they involve too strongly. But remember the Child that was laid in Bethlehem's manger was a King, a King by divine right. He was born to be King, and that element is in the gospels and it was also in the ancient prophetic scriptures concerning Him: "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever . . . Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

We speak of the gladness of Christmas, of its exuberant joy. We wish each other "A Merry Christmas", or "A Happy Christmas." Of what value is it all? It could not be even possible were it not true that the One Whose birth we celebrate was born to be King. I say,

there is that great truth in the gospel, and we must never forget that power, that unlimited power—we call it *omnipotence*! We fill our mouths with great words which we do not understand, and talk about divine *almightiness*. But whatever word you employ, you must remember that the power, the majesty of Deity, is in the gospel, that the gospel is a revelation, a self-disclosure, an unveiling, not merely of a little Child, but of One Who from all eternity to all eternity, was and is a King, sovereign over all.

You say, "Did He not come to be a Saviour?" Yes; my friends, but He could never have been a Saviour if He had not been a King. I love to mark the steps of His triumphal march, how everywhere, by the exercise of His own inherent power, He compelled every realm in which He operated to recognize His inherent kingliness: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it", said Mary His mother—herself wondering and worshipping this Son of hers, Who as yet she did not understand. And they did as they were told, and all the processes of nature were abbreviated, accelerated, and as someone has said, "The conscious water saw its Lord and blushed." He was the King Who could make, by His own power, even as He made all things by the word of His omnipotence, the best of all wine, and ministered the superlative, the supreme gladness to the feast. Jesus is everywhere King.

"What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" Ah, you Evolutionists! Are there any here who think of God as a remote Figure, who think of the Creator as though by His own act, if you will, an act of self-exclusion, He had removed Himself from the created order? Not at all! He that is born King *by the very fact of His birth* proves to an intelligent mind—I use the strongest language I know—*absolutely demonstrates the truth that the evolutionary hypothesis is never anything better than the philosophy of fools*. He is born King—and in the world that He made shows Himself sovereign of all powers which radiate from His own Personality—demonstrates the falsity of any mechanistic view of the universe. A personal, transcendent, Will is regnant in the universe. He is born King, the world is not without a King! In His name I affirm it! So was it all through life, and even in death. Indeed it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

I have seen His Majesty, King George, ride in state. Very splendid! And because of his position, of all that he is, I frankly can say I am conservative enough to glory in it. And when I heard people all over the world this morning sing, "God save our gracious King", my heart sang it too. And when I heard His Majesty wish all his people a Happy Christmas, and quoted the word of God, I said, "God save the King, God bless him; long may he reign!" But King George was never attended by such circumstances of royalty, by such accompaniments of kingship, as was the Babe of Bethlehem; and when at last He came to the cross, when He yielded His hands and feet to the nails, and suffered them to lift Him up at the place called Calvary, and all nature acknowledged His supremacy, the sun exchanged at noon His wonted bridal vestments for the mourning robes of night, the constellations formed in funeral procession, and the whole earth trembled with emotion as the God-man yielded up His life,—and there above the cross written

by human hand, but sovereignly directed by a power that was from above, there—had men but eyes to see it—it was written: "This is the King". And Pilate said, "What I have written, I have written" because another Hand had written it. He was always a King.

At the place called Calvary, as the King, in person, He went forth to do battle against our enemy. They said to David: "Thou art worth ten thousand of us." Angels might have said that to the Man on Calvary, all the inhabitants of earth might well have said: "Thou art worthy of all of us"—for He was! Notwithstanding, single-handed in His own proper Person He subdued all our foes:

"He hell in hell laid low,
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew;
Bowed to the grave destroyed it so,
And death, by dying, slew."

He was born to be King. Hallelujah!

But you say, Was He not born to be Saviour? Did He not come to die? I answer: He died as a King Who was monarch of the universe. He died as a King Who was greater than all human potentates, who could have no power against Him, save what was given them; and even the king of terrors was subject to His sceptre. Oh, for power to sing the praises of the King! He died as a King? Yes, How better could He show His power than by thus providing amnesty for His foes. You must not think of Jesus as an unwilling Lamb led to the slaughter, but as a mighty warrior-King celebrating His sovereign power by an act of sovereign grace, dying the just for the unjust to bring them to God. Oh, rebellious men! presume not upon the tender mercies of God, nor think that in this economy God has laid His sceptre by.

III.

And what is grace? Infinite tenderness? Yes. The compassions of God? Yes; but more than that: grace is another name for God, as we have so often said in this place. Someone may say a certain thing is an act of grace. Well, grace as applied to mere men is one thing, but the grace of God is something vastly different. I would proclaim the grace of God, preach it to everyone if I could. But it must be remembered that it is said of grace, that grace reigns. Grace is representative of power, of might, of majesty. But what is grace? Grace is the fullest manifestation of the glory of God seen by men or angels. Grace is all the attributes of Deity combined and in redeeming exercise. Grace is the despair of hell, the wonder of earth, and the glory of heaven. I will sing of grace, but it shall be grace! Grace cradled in a manger, dying on the cross, bursting the bands of death, rending the heavens, and sitting on a throne! That is grace! Grace does not beg as a pauper; grace does not kneel as a suppliant: GRACE REIGNS! Oh, hear it, ye rebels, who dare longer to strive! Hear it, ye despairing souls in bondage held! Hear it, ye devils in the caverns of darkness, and hear it ye angels, and oh, help me to proclaim it! Grace reigns "through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord"! I proclaim the birth of One born to be King, of a King triumphant in redeeming love.

And *there is nothing you need so much as a King*. A Saviour, you say? But no one could be your Saviour who could not be your King. What is wrong with your life? Every field is sown with tares, every city besieged, every power held in bondage more or less complete. No

one could be your Saviour who was not able to break the power of cancelled sin, and set the prisoner free.

General Gordon was a good man, a godly man. He put aside his sword; he carried but a little cane for a long time. And so he went to Khartoum. I remember reading, as a little boy, of the martyrdom of Gordon in Khartoum. Gordon died, and Khartoum was shut up, and the British residents were captives for weary years. Then they sent a man to Egypt called Herbert Kitchener. He was an engineer, a soldier. His name ceased to appear in the papers; he was forgotten. And he began to build a railway, and to move inch by inch, mile by mile, until he laid a railway across the desert, and to the gates of Khartoum, which should bring to bear upon that citadel of evil, all the might of the British Empire. By this means he broke, smashed, destroyed the power of the Mahdians and set the prisoner free. A picture of delivering grace! Steady, persistent, irresistible, invincible, at last He destroyed principalities and powers, triumphing over them, and making a show of them openly. Because He was born a King.

Oh, yes, sing of grace! But let it be triumphant, undaunted, invincible, grace. "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Christmas means more than toys tied on Christmas trees. Christmas means more than a lot of pleasant greetings, lovely as they are. We wish our friends a Merry Christmas. I have no doubt when His Majesty the King said this morning—he spoke as a father of a family—that he wished all his people a happy Christmas, I have no doubt that even the king said in his heart: "I wish I had power to make that wish an effectual wish, to end everybody's hunger and unemployment, to dry everybody's tears, and to make everyone throughout the empire really happy." But the wish of this great King Whom I proclaim is more than a wish: it is a command. It has power in it, for our gracious Lord is born to be King, and He is King. He has not laid His sceptre by.

IV.

BUT WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IT ALL? WHAT IS THE APPLICATION? Would you like to be a king? I do not mean to live in an earthly palace. Would you like to be a man of some great distinction, and enjoy that fame which Pope describes as "a fancied life in others' breath"? If everyone spoke well of you you would welcome such kindly speech, would you not? Oh, how we like to have our praises sung in a very small circle sometimes! So vain are we! But, my dear friends, that does not matter so very much, whether we are men of achievement—it is well to do good, of course—but I mean it is relatively unimportant whether we become prominent in this life. But *there is a realm in which we must be kings, or we cannot be happy.* There can be no happy Christmas in the last analysis of things for anyone who is not a king. No happy Christmas for a slave, a serf, the man who has no sceptre, no power to do the thing that ought to be done! You would send your presents, if you could, to men behind iron bars. Feed them well, give them turkey, and everything else that they could eat. But I will venture to say that any one of them would say, "You may have all these presents if only you will open the doors and let me be free, that I may feel that once again I am a man."

In the beginning when God had made this glorious earth, He made His own creature, bearing His image

and likeness, and He put a sceptre in his hands, and a crown upon his brow, and He said: "Have dominion"; "Thou madest him to have dominion." Originally we were all intended to be kings; But, alas! we have lost our crowns; like the Kaiser at Doorn, we have been kings in exile, with no liberty to go home, and all our kingliness must be viewed in retrospect.

But there may be a happy Christmas for us; for there is joy and gladness in that higher moral and spiritual realm which surpasses everything that belongs to the visible and temporal.

Can we become kings again? If so, how shall we become kings? By what means can the crown again be fashioned, and the sceptre restored to our impotent hands? How can that be done? The same principle holds. We must ask again: "Where is he that is born king", for those qualities that will give us power, prominence, and, ultimately, preeminence in the moral and spiritual realm, are qualities which belong to birth, and can never by any human process be acquired. "Marvel not that I said unto thee"—said He Who was born King—"ye must be born again."

Oh, that is the message of Christmas, that we may be born again, and born kings, that all our kingly powers may be communicated to us from Him Who is born King—not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles, for "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all"—we are all born to be kings.

And *such as are born to be kings will have a kingdom.* Some years ago I was entertained for a short period in one of the old castles in Ireland, by an Irish nobleman. As we went up the old oaken staircase that had stood for more than a thousand years, and saw the old castle as it had stood in the days of King John, when in that place he received the Irish barons, this good man said, "I want you to see my children." He had three lovely little children, and one of them was wakened up by his nurse, and brought out to see us. He was only a little fellow, and he came rubbing his eyes like any other child, for he had not had his sleep out. As he came down the stairs holding his mother's hand he began to cry, and she said, "You must not cry, for if you do I will tell the king about you." She then turned to me and said, "We are to entertain ex-King Manuel to-morrow", ex-king Manuel of Portugal. The ex-king! Ah, the world is full of ex-kings. We are all ex-kings, without any kingdom. But being born again we may hear one say: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." You shall not only have a crown and a sceptre, but a kingdom as well, for by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead we are begotten unto a living hope "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." That is the destiny of all of us, to come to the kingdom, to live in a palace, to wear a crown, to sit upon a throne. In the last book of the Bible one who had been partaker of that abounding grace, giving all honour and glory to Him Who was born to be king, exclaimed: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen."

May God give us, by His grace, a happy Christmas here, and a still happier Christmas in the unending hereafter!



CHRISTMAS TWICE



A Story for the Boys and Girls

PART I.

David sat up with a start, and his sleepy brown eyes flew wide open.

What was that light which made the sky so bright that he couldn't see the stars? It wasn't just daylight, he was sure of that. And what was that far-away music? Those delightful sounds could not be just the music of a shepherd's pipe, melodious though that was. Quickly the little figure jumped up from the rough bed in the corner of the shepherds' rude shelter, and crept shyly to the door to see and listen. His heart beat fast; something exciting must be going to happen!

He was an adventurous little soul, and in spite of his alarm he was glad that the excitement was on this night, when he had at last persuaded his mother to let him go with his uncle Isaac to watch the sheep; for his home was in the big city of Jerusalem, and he did not often get a chance to see the shepherds at their work,—and how he did love the wee woolly lambs! But by the time the big stars had come out and the little white lambs had gone to bed, he too, had grown so sleepy that his eyes just wouldn't stay open.

Now, however, they opened wider and wider as he stood gazing at the sky. The light was growing so bright, and the far-away strains were so sweet that they almost hurt. Suddenly, out of the midst of the glory, a white form took shape and stood before the little group of shepherds who were seated on the ground, silent with the amazement and wonder of it all. "Why," said David to himself, "he must be an angel such as Mother has often told me about. In the Holy Books they sometimes came to see Abraham and Jacob and the great men of God, but I didn't think I should ever see one."

Listen! The strange heavenly visitor was speaking to the men. What was he saying? Across the still night air David could hear the words very plainly: "Don't be afraid; for see! I am bringing you a message of great joy which shall be for all the people: in David's town there has been born to you to-day a Saviour Who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find the baby wrapped up tight and warm and lying in a manger."

Of course David wasn't afraid. How could he be when the angel looked so kind, and spoke so joyfully? He had said something about "David's town". This David knew which one that was—Bethlehem, whose dark outlines he could see on the hill opposite. It was the town where David, the great shepherd-king, had been born, (proud he was to be his namesake) where his uncle Isaac lived, and where he and his mother had come for the census in their own home town. A "baby . . . lying in a manger" . . .! He must ask his uncle what that meant. But look! there were more angels, and more, and more! There seemed to be hundreds of them, and they were all singing praises to God:

"Glory to God on high,
Peace on earth to men of goodwill."

Oh, how lovely! And suddenly, while he looked, they all went away, up and up and up, right out of his sight;

and all was still once more, and the stars and the sheep and the little lambs were just as they had been before. Had he only dreamed it all? Oh, he hoped it wasn't just a dream!

But no. At last the shepherds moved again, beginning to talk excitedly and pointing to the town. His uncle came running to him: "David boy, did you hear? Did you see the angels?" he cried.

"Yes, I saw them," answered David, "and I wasn't a bit afraid. Weren't they just beautiful?"

"Indeed they were," said his uncle. "And, David, they said the Messiah is born, the King for Whom we have waited so long. He is born in Bethlehem. Blessed be the name of the Lord, Who has not forgotten His promises to Israel."

"They talked about a baby, Uncle. Is He a baby just as I used to be?"

"Yes, dear. They said He is lying in a manger and we may see Him."

"Oh, may I go, too? Please, please, Uncle. I should like to see Him", cried the little boy eagerly.

"Yes," replied Uncle Isaac, and added to himself, "for He has come as a little Child, and surely a child may go to Him."

As his little feet hurried to keep up with the shepherds hastening over the plain, David had forgotten everything else, even the little white woolly lambs,—for he was going to see the Christ Child, and it was the very first Christmas Day.

PART II.

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and they know Me." The Speaker with the gentle voice said the words slowly and distinctly, so that everyone in the crowd could hear. His lovely eyes looked kindly on them all, and His gracious smile warmed their hearts.

A young man at the edge of the crowd listened intently—a stalwart fellow, with keen brown eyes which kept searching the Speaker's face as if he felt it should be familiar to him. His blue turban, long coarse robe and the satchel at his waist made it evident that he was a shepherd. So it was natural that he should be interested in this talk about sheep and shepherds; for had he not one of the best flocks in the country? and did he not know everything about sheep? Yes, the Preacher had told them truly. He, too, knew about sheep. He had given a true picture of the things with which every shepherd is familiar.

But those other things He had said . . . "I have come that they may have life and have it overflowing. I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep." As he thought the words over, and looked into that earnest face, a startling idea came to him. Could it be so? Yes, perhaps this One they called Jesus was that little Baby grown up. Ever since that never-to-be-forgotten night when he had seen the angels and then the little Baby in the manger, David had felt in his heart that God really had sent the Messiah. This Man spoke as if He were sure that God had sent Him. Yes, He must be that Baby grown up, the Saviour of Whom the angels had told.

But the rulers of the synagogues did not believe it, and they had warned their people against Him. Even now they were quarrelling about the truth of His words, and looking with anger at the One Who had spoken them. He heard someone say, "Let's ask Him to tell us plainly whether He is the Christ." David stepped forward quickly to go with them, for he didn't want to miss that answer. This time the lovely eyes looked rather stern, and the words were spoken sadly, with rebuke and pleading in the tone: "I told you and you didn't believe. The deeds which I do in the name of My Father, these testify about Me. But you do not believe because you don't belong to My sheep. My sheep listen to My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I am giving them eternal life, and there is no fear that they ever will perish, and nobody shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father Who gave them to Me is greater than everybody else, and nobody can snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

He finished speaking, and one of the rulers, with a look of hatred, took up a stone, but was afraid to throw it at Him. David looked at Him again, and then at the man with the stone. What a contrast between His earnest, gracious face and the scowls of those about Him! In a flash David had decided the question. He knew in his heart that Jesus had spoken the truth. He wanted that Shepherd and that overflowing life. "Master," he said, going close to Him, "I do believe You are the Messiah. Give me eternal life." As the Master looked at him and smiled, David was sure he was one of His sheep.

Once again it was the time we call Christmas, and David had found the Christ.—L.B.

NEWS OF UNION CHURCHES

Opening of Lindsay Regular Baptist Church

"The opening of our new Church was an event which will long be remembered by those who were privileged to be present. After seven months of very hard work, the beautiful little building, which has seating accommodation for about two hundred and twenty-five people, was opened on the twenty-eighth day of November. There was a splendid congregation, many of the churches in the Sunderland and District Association being well represented. The presence of the pastors of those churches added greatly to the spiritual atmosphere of the service, and their greetings and messages were greatly appreciated.

The Sunday services were beyond our expectation, although we had been much in prayer and were looking to the Lord for a time of rich blessing. And certainly He set His seal upon our effort. The glory of the Lord filled the house. Rev. C. J. Loney of Stanley Avenue Baptist Church, Hamilton, was the preacher for the occasion. The power of the Spirit was mightily upon him, and the messages were blessed and owned of God at each of the three services. It was a wonderful sight at the conclusion of the evening service to see about forty young men and young women ranged along the front of the church, some accepting Christ as their Saviour, and many renewing their vows of consecration. We do sincerely praise God for the glorious ministry of Mr. Loney, under the power of the Holy Spirit, and for the visible manifestation of God's favour on our first Sunday services in the sanctuary built for His glory.

A Young People's Rally

A very enjoyable evening was spent two weeks ago when the Young People of the Chatham Regular Baptist Church entertained societies from Essex, Wheatley, Courtright and Wilkesport. About seventy-five in all were in attendance.

Each of the different churches represented took part in the programme. A drama illustrating the value of personal work was put on by the Chatham Young People. The Essex group

supplied the music; Mr. Fullard playing some selections on his violin, and also singing in a duet. An interesting Bible contest was sponsored by the Courtright and Wilkesport Baptist Churches.

Mr. Max Forsythe of Chatham was the speaker of the evening, taking as his text 2 Timothy 2:3, 4. He gave a very fine message which was fitting and helpful.

A delightful luncheon was served at the close by the Chatham Young People.

Rev. E. Hancox

Mr. Hancox will be completing his missionary work on January 31st, 1936, and will be open for any engagements among the churches. He may be addressed in care of the Union Office, 337 Jarvis Street, Toronto.

Comfort Boxes

We hope that all the Comfort Boxes will be sent out this week in order that they may reach their destination in good time for Christmas. The Dorcas Society of the Jarvis Street Baptist Church held its annual display of work on Tuesday of this week, and we are sure the beautiful and useful contents of their boxes will bring much happiness and comfort to the recipients.

A Last-Minute Christmas Gift

Are you behind with your Christmas shopping? To-day's papers warned us—there are but five more shopping days before Christmas. Let us solve your gift problem by sending, in your name, together with a greeting card, a copy of

"OTHER LITTLE SHIPS"

to several of your friends. \$1.50 each, or

\$5.00 FOR FOUR COPIES,

sent anywhere.

We print below a form for your convenience.

THE GOSPEL WITNESS,
Toronto, Canada.

Please send a copy of "Other Little Ships" to each of the following addresses:

Name.....

Name.....

Name.....

Name.....

Sender's Name.....

Whole Bible Course Lesson Leaf

Vol. 11

No. 1

REV. ALEX. THOMSON, EDITOR

Lesson 1 First Quarter January 5th, 1936

THE DIVINE APPEAL TO JUDAH

Lesson Text: Isaiah, chapter 1.

Golden Text: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—Isaiah 1:18.

Bible School Reading: Isaiah 1:1-20.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS: Monday—2 Kings 15:1-7; Tuesday—Jer. 4:11-18; Wednesday—Mic. 6:1-8; Thursday—Rom. 9:27-33; Friday—Eph. 1:1-7; Saturday—Rev. 3:14-22.

INTRODUCTION

Isaiah, known as the evangelical prophet on account of his wondrous Messianic and gospel messages, was the son of Amoz; and carried on his labour in the kingdom of Judah in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Concerning his private life, we have few particulars. We know he was a married man (7:3; 8:3, 18), and that he moved in the upper circles of society. The time in which he lived was one largely of political prosperity and religious decline (2 Kings, chaps. 15 to 20). God called this prophet to bear witness unto Him before the nation (ch. 6), and faithfully did he carry out his mission. He rebuked his people for their sins, exhorted them to repentance, assured them of the mercy of God, predicted judgment on the wicked, and prophesied the coming of the Messiah in suffering and glory. He is probably the most sublime, versatile, and comprehensive of all the prophets. Respecting the unity of the prophecy, it may be stated, in spite of critical opinion to the contrary, that its unity is upheld by a rational study of the book. In early versions, the prophecies of this book stand under one name, and the New Testament attributes the whole book to Isaiah. Other reasons of an equally convincing nature may be given to this same end, and we may be sure that all came through him. The content may be divided into three parts—first, prophetic matter relating to Judah and foreign nations (chaps. 1 to 35); second, historical matter relating to the reign of Hezekiah (chaps. 36 to 39); third, prophetic matter relating to the future blessing of Israel (chaps. 40-66).

REBELLION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (vs. 1-9)

After stating the time during which he carried on his prophetic ministry, Isaiah proceeds to deliver the message of the Lord to His people; wherein rebellion and its consequences are set forth in plain language. The heavens and the earth are called upon to hear as the Lord speaks complainingly of the disobedience of His people. He had nourished them and brought them up, yet, unlike the ox or the ass, they did not recognize or attend to Him as their Master. They were disobedient, forgetful, and careless respecting God. Note the similar attitude on the part of many these days. God is good to all, yet how few recognize and respond to His goodness. Israel is further referred to as a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, and children that are corrupters, who had forsaken the Lord, provoked Him to anger, and gone away backward. Note their designations as: nation, people, seed, and children (Ex. 19:6; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 2:21; Deut. 14:1); also the nature of their sin. They were backsliders who had sinned grievously against their God. Observe the possibility, ways, and tendencies of backsliding. Peter following afar off, ended in denying his Lord (Mark 14:54; 66:72). The consequences of Israel's rebellion are then set forth. The nation's sin had affected every part of the body: from the sole of the foot, even unto the head. And from these wounds made by enemies prior to Uzziah's reign, they had not at that time recovered (vs. 5-9). It should ever be remembered that sin brings evil conse-

quences. Note the foolishness and danger of disobeying God; also the safeguards against backsliding on the part of the child of God, in prayer, Bible-reading, and right living before God and men.

POLLUTED WORSHIP FORBIDDEN (vs. 10-15)

In this section the very important lesson is taught that God desires obedience before sacrifice (I. Sam. 15:22); and that if such be lacking, formal worship is unacceptable (Ps. 50:16; Mic. 6:6-8). In heart, the people of Israel were afar from God, but the outward forms of worship were continued. Multitudes of sacrifices were offered unto the Lord, rites were observed, and festivals kept; yet these availed not while their sin remained. God demanded them to cease bringing their vain oblations, and expressed His abhorrence of their hypocritical attitude. He also told them that He would not hear their prayers. Sin in the life hinders answered prayer (59:1, 2; Ps. 66:18). Note God's hatred of hypocrisy (Matt. 23:13), His demand for sincerity on the part of all who approach Him (Deut. 18:13; Jos. 24:14), the possibility of having an outward form of godliness without a corresponding inward experience (2 Tim. 3:5), and the fact that the individual must be right with God before his worship is acceptable (John 4:24). It should be stated that God is not condemning sacrifice here, but merely emphasizing the necessity for a proper heart-relationship before the sacrifice can be acceptable unto Him.

CLEANSING FROM SIN ENJOINED (vs. 16-20)

Condemnation of sin is followed by direction respecting cleansing therefrom. Condemnation alone is discouraging, but when this is accompanied by information of foregiveness it is then directive and beneficial. The command is given to wash and be clean; to put away the evil of their doings; to learn to do well; and to seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow. Obedience to this command would imply repentance, conversion, and practical godly living. Note the New Testament teaching concerning repentance (Luke 13:3), conversion (Matt. 18:3), Christian living (Eph. 4:1), cleansing from sin (I. John 1:7), and faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8). Observe further the gracious invitation to reason the case with God. His attitude toward the sinner is a just one, and He would have this known. Note the colours applied to sin, denoting their double-dyed nature; and the contrast effected by the action of God. He alone can make the guilty, sin-besmirched soul as white as snow. We have here the grace of God in offering to cleanse the sinner; the condition of the sinner, due to his sin—defiled, helpless, and hopeless—and the only hope of cleansing by the action of God. One may also note the blessed state of the cleansed one: "White as snow." God always makes a good job of those who come to Him. Illustrations of this may be found in Scripture (Luke 7:36-50; Acts 9:1-6), and in present-day experience. The blessing of obedience is thereafter set before the people (v. 19), together with the punishment of disobedience. These both refer to temporal consequences, but reveal the principle that actions, whether good or bad, are noted by God, and are attended by corresponding consequences (Gal. 6:7).

JUDGMENT PRONOUNCED (vs. 21-31)

After the warning of the previous verse, reference is made to the condition of Jerusalem, which is compared to that of a harlot. The city had formerly been faithful to God, but at that time unrighteousness reigned in it; murder, rebellion, bribery, and corruption, were found therein. Note the modern cities with their sins. For such sins, God promised to judge the guilty. And then purging away the dross, in the persons of guilt, the promise is made of the restoration of just judges and counsellors. Such a radical change would this be, that the character of the city would be altered; and it would become known as "the city of righteousness, the faithful city". The guilty persons referred to were evidently among the magistracy. Those forming this body always have a great influence over all classes, and give a reputation to the place in which they officiate. Note the responsibility of such, and their opportunity for good service. The closing verses further describe the divine judgment on the guilty. What must God think of the place where we dwell? How may we aid in changing its character for good?