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## *Not Ancient History*

Hail, infant martyrs! new-born victims, hail!  
Hail, earliest flowerets of the Christian spring!  
O'er whom, like rosebuds scattered by the gale,  
The cruel sword such havoc dared to fling.

Oh, what availed thee, Herod, this thy guilt,  
This load of crime that on thy conscience lies?  
The Lord alone, Whose blood thou wouldst have spilt,  
Now mocks thy malice and thy power defies.

The Lord's first votive offerings of blood,  
First tender lambs unto the altar laid,  
Around in fearless innocence they stood,  
And sported gayly with the murderous blade.

Yes! He alone survived, when all the ground  
Drank the red torrents of that carnage wild:  
Though many a childless mother wailed around,  
The hand of murder spared the Virgin's Child!

O Jesu, virgin-born! all praise to Thee,  
And to the Father and the Holy Ghost!  
One God eternal, Ever honoured be  
By saints on earth and by the heavenly host!

—*Prudentius*, Translated by John Chandler.

## THE DANGER OF ANSWERING A MATTER BEFORE HEARING IT

**T**HERE is a proverb in the Book of books which says "he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him", that is to say, that before one forms a judgment he must hear all the facts, and form his judgment on the basis of the evidence submitted.

There are comparatively few people who have a judicial mind. Many people jump to a conclusion from the first word. They answer a matter before they hear it, and when once they have formed their opinion on the basis of one side of a question, it is very difficult to find access to the mind with the facts of the other side. And when such an one does that, it is folly and shame; that is to say, it is an indication of intellectual weakness. It is folly.

Anyone ought to know there are two sides to any question, and ought in all fairness to all concerned, to withhold judgment until all the facts are presented. It is "folly" to do otherwise; and it is a shame also unto him, a shame because it indicates a moral defect.

There is a Scripture which says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." That is to say, if we act without being absolutely sure of our ground, we incur the risk of being wrong, and therefore, if we proceed without faith, we accept the risk of actually committing sin. But it is folly and shame in another sense. Sooner or later the facts of the case will come to light, and the man who has answered before hearing the whole story, and has formed a judgment, and taken action upon that judgment, will appear in the light of being somewhat of a fool for having done so. Then it will be a shame to him, because it will show that he was predisposed to receive evil, and in the light of all the facts, he will appear as somewhat of a shameful fool.

There are many scriptural examples that can be cited indicating the folly of such a procedure, but perhaps one of the most striking belongs to the experience of David. Many will remember how David, in obedience to his covenant engagement with Jonathan, asked if there was any left of the house of Saul, that he might show the kindness of God to him. He was informed of Mephibosheth, who was in Lodebar, a man lame on both his feet. David sent for him, adopted him into his family, restored to him all of the land of his father, and made him to eat bread at the king's table continually, as one of the king's sons. And so all went well with Mephibosheth until the rebellion of Absalom.

Absalom from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet was a traitor. He betrayed his father. He was accustomed to rise up early, and stand beside the way of the gate, and when any man who had a controversy came to the king, Absalom said, "See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh, that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" So it is said, in due course when he thought he had sown the seed of sedition, with a sufficiently liberal hand, he openly rebelled against the king; and the people, like almost any mob, being ready to answer a thing before they heard it, followed after Absalom. Some people, however, remained loyal, and went out to the king in his exile, to minister

to him. Among those who thus went to David, was Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth. Here is the story:

And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and a hundred bunches of raisins, and a hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.

And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.

And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

So David made the mistake of answering a matter before he heard it. He listened to Ziba, and assumed that what Ziba said of Mephibosheth, that he, too, had turned traitor, was true.

But when the rebellion was quelled, and David returned to his city, we have another story:

And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace.

And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest not thou with me, Mephibosheth?

And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame.

And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes.

For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king?

And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land.

And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

Thus David found that he had done an injustice to one of the most loyal of all his subjects. Then even David did really have to hang his head in shame.

That is one classic example of the folly and shame of jumping to a conclusion without a knowledge of all the facts.

# The Jarvis Street Pulpit

## How to Have a Truly Merry Christmas

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

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 21st, 1947  
(Stenographically Reported)

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

"He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

"If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father:"

—John 15:22-24.

**G**REAT privileges invariably involve great responsibilities. Great advantages imply great obligations. We are, all of us, disposed to rejoice in, and even to revel in our privileges, to glory in our advantages, without properly recognizing the responsibilities and obligations which are their concomitants.

It is customary for us to think of Christmas as a joyous season, as a time when we commemorate the coming of the Son of God into the world. We cannot sing too joyously, or heartily. We cannot ring our bells too loudly. It would be impossible for anyone to exaggerate the benediction involved in it. Yet it carries with it certain responsibilities which we are too disposed to ignore. Most people like to look on the credit side of their bank book, if they have such a thing, and would fain forget the debits. But if life is to be lived well and sanely, it must be lived in due balance. The equilibrium must be maintained; we must avoid the pendulous tendency to swing to one side or the other. There is a sense in which it is extremely desirable, and eminently safe to keep in the middle of the king's highway, especially when it is a one-way road.

### I.

OUR LORD JESUS CONTEMPLATES SOMETHING THAT IS TRULY AWFUL, PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD. What if He had not come? What if He had not spoken? Or, coming, and speaking, what if He had not done the works which none other man did? We can think of many of the advantages of what we call our present-day civilization. Sometimes it would be well for us to turn back the pages of history, and contemplate what might have been, if certain things had not taken place. If men had not discovered the great potential resident in the streams and the rivers of earth, if they had not early learned to drop their wheels into their flowing currents, to grind their corn, and to get their logs to build their houses, how much slower human progress would have been! If the power of steam had not been observed, and applied for the purpose of carrying our burdens, and transporting us about the surface of the earth, and of the sea, how different would our civilization be! What a different distribution of population the world would have observed, if that one thing had not occurred! If we had remained in ignorance of that subtle energy, which we call electricity, which turns the wheels of our factories, and speeds our cars on the way; which lightens

the housewife's duty, and makes a hundred burdens to be as nothing; which has made the science of aviation possible, and practical, and the rapid transportation of men and things at an unbelievable speed—what if these things had remained hidden from the human mind! Even with our normal capacity, how differently we should all be living, and what a different world this would be!

*But if Jesus had not come, that would have made a greater difference than the absence of all these elements of human knowledge.* If He had never broken in upon our darkness and ignorance, if He had not come and spoken, what a world this would be to-night! If He had not come, we should never have dreamed of the possibility of human helplessness' invoking divine omnipotence. We should have supposed that we must work out our own salvation; we must exercise what little powers we have to get the day's work done, and more especially to live as we might, and by our own instincts, learn to live without any help from without. If the broken earthenware had to be mended by human hands, if the wreck and ruin of human life were strewn before us, with no promise of superhuman help toward recovery and restoration and recreation, what a world of ruin this would have been! If we were shut up to the sum total of human knowledge, discoverable by unaided human reason, with no extra mundane illumination, no apocalyptic element, no revelation from Above, had we been left to grope our way in the darkness which we ourselves did create, and try by our own efforts somehow to discover the path of life,—what a dreary thing human life would be, if He had not come, saying, "I am come a Light into the world".

What a world of discord, of dissonance, of sounds unmusical; what a cacophony this had been, with every life out of tune, with all the strings of the human harp broken, and with no one to retune a discordant world, to restore its harmony, and to bring it back again into tune with God! If He had not come we had never heard the angels sing. We should never have known what music really is. If He, Who is the Author of all harmony, the Master Musician, the Creator of the great organ of the universe, every pipe of which responds to the Master's touch, to proclaim His Majesty, and His glory,—if He had not come this world had been self-destroyed and had become a praiseless void.

If Jesus had not come, we should never have known

the ultimate truth of anything. If He had not come and spoken to us, the life of the future would have been mere conjecture. We might have dreamed of it, as all men have. We might have cherished dimly, and dumbly the idea of immortality, and perhaps the possibility of the survival of personality in some better life beyond; but it would all have been pure conjecture, all guess-work; and we should have been like—I had almost said—the ancients trying to find the northwest passage, like explorers of the mysteries and wonders of this earth, just groping our way, wondering, Is there any way out of this life into the next, that would introduce us to something better?

At this Christmas season we should look at our vacant chairs, that were occupied last Christmas, or the Christmas before, and we should wonder where they are who then were with us, and how they are faring, whether there is any possibility, as one poor stricken man said to me, "of catching up with her" by and by.

These would be questions we should still be asking, if this wondrous Man had not come and spoken unto us. But, blessed be His name, *He has come!* He came down from heaven. He said, I came down from the Father, and I shall return to the Father. But for that word we might still have been foolishly following the example of the Babel builders, trying to build for ourselves a city and a tower whose top should reach to heaven. We might have dreamed of climbing up to heaven. We had never dreamed of Heaven's coming down to us, if He had not come and spoken unto us, and if He had not done among us the works than none other man did! How often they asked—they do not bother asking you or me such a question—"Who art Thou?" Who we may be does not matter. But they pressed that question upon Him: "Who art Thou? What sayest Thou of Thyself?" Even His enemies recognized the uniqueness of the Man of Nazareth. But whence that peculiar quality came; by what magic He was so endowed, they could not guess. "But," said He, "I did among them the works that none other man did." "Believe me," said He on another occasion, "for the works' sake." My works are my credentials.

What works? If I had time to take you through the story of His miracles, I could show you that He exercised His sovereign power in every realm of nature, showed Himself to be the Lord of all. Not only so, He showed Himself to be the Lord and Master of the entire universe. That ethical element of right and wrong, of righteousness and unrighteousness, the outshining of His character, displayed a righteousness which was foreign to all that belongs to this lower earth; and that He was Master of the spiritual realm, even the devils acknowledged. The works that He wrought by divine power, credentialed, and validated His claim to Messiahship, and proclaimed Him to be all that He said He was, the Son of God from Heaven, come down to men.

My dear friends, what a blessing it is that some of us can say, "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." This Christmas story is to many of us far more than an historical record, more than a bit of history, more than something in a book—We know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the King, because we know that He has been formed in us the hope of glory. Our very hearts have

become the manger in which the Incarnate God has been cradled.

What a high privilege, then, to know that He has come, and spoken unto us; and to know that He has come, and done such works as none other man did; and especially that He has done something for us that nobody else ever did, or ever could do, even making us new creatures in Christ Jesus.

That being an accomplished fact, we are not troubled by the man who says there is no Santa Claus. Oh, it is a pity that some benighted minds should have nothing better to do than to try to take the smiles from the faces of little children. If He had not come, and spoken to us, we should never have known the value of these children, and of the other children they represent. We should never have known that a little child outweighs in value all the wealth of the whole universe. But Jesus taught us that.

He said, "They had not sinned if I had not spoken, but now that they have my word, they have no excuse." That is not my word. They have no cloke, no excuse. "Now that I have spoken unto them, they have no excuse for their sin. I have told them how they could be forgiven. I have told them how they may find the way to heaven. I have told them how all sin's ruin may be obliterated by Him, Who says, 'Behold, I make all things new.' If they do not listen to what I say, there is no excuse for them. They stand condemned at the judgment bar, and no one shall plead for them there, for they had My word." That is what He said when He gave account to His Father in that last high-priestly prayer: "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee." I did among them such works as none other ever did." What did He mean? He meant, "I showed them what God is like; I showed them Who God is. I have proved to them that I am God."

## II.

Then He utters THIS MOST TERRIBLE INDICTMENT. Listen to it. He says the man who disbelieves His word, who rejects Him—hear it, unsaved man—hath "hated both me and my Father". The man who rejects Jesus Christ is charged before the Bar of Heaven, with hating God! There could be no greater crime than that!

Oh, why should not this be Christmas to us all! Knowing His incomparable works, the indisputable proofs, not of His Divinity, but of His Deity, hear His word, the very word of God.

Why should we not believe in Santa Claus? Why should we not believe that Heaven is opened, and that God has come down: "Every good, and every perfect gift cometh down from above". There is only one way of ensuring a merry Christmas that I know of, and that is to receive Jesus Christ into our hearts. Let the Christmas bells begin ringing there. Let your heart be a place wherein the King of Glory is worshipped with gold, and frankincense, and myrrh; and, knowing the Lord Jesus, we can look into the future with delightful composure, assured that however dark the day, at the end of the road lies the Eternal City.

When I was a young man away from home, I used to count the days before Christmas. In a certain town where I was stationed, I got very homesick, and I went down to the railway tracks that led home, and I felt almost like getting down and kissing the rails. Right

along that track, at the end of the road, a brightly lighted home was waiting for me, and father and mother, and others, to celebrate a joyous Christmas. I feel like that now. Most of them have gone on; but I am still looking down the road that leads home. Some day, if we believe in the Lord Jesus, we shall enter through the gates into the City, and there will be a special Christmas present waiting for every one of us, and we shall discover that not one of us has taken the great Santa Claus by surprise, as He meets us, and greets us, and loads us with His everlasting benedictions.

Let us pray:

We thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast come. We bless Thee that we know a little bit of the meaning of Thy coming. Teach us more. Make this to every one of us a season wherein we shall welcome the King of Glory to our hearts, for His name's sake. Amen.

## THE DIVINE ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL CHURCHES

By Rev. John Wilmot

**I**, JESUS, have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" (Rev. XXII 16). Placed at the end of the Scriptures and of "the revelation of Jesus Christ", this directive to the churches is significant. At once its connection with the opening chapters is observed. The arresting vision of glory and majesty is of the Lord Himself, but the instruction and explanation concern the churches, symbolically presented in their relation to Him. The apostle, being "in the Spirit" received commandment from the "Alpha and Omega", the eternal Word, Who, in His offices, relations and achievements, of which Holy Scripture is the exposition, is the totality of divine revelation signified by the embrace of these first and final letters. The command was to write *the whole vision* in a book and to send it to the seven churches. Turning to see Who the Speaker was, he observed seven lampstands with the heavenly Lord in their midst in Whose right hand were seven stars. The lampstands represented the churches and the stars their angels, that is, their appointed ministers under the authority of the Lord. Each minister was responsible for his own church on earth, but all the churches and their ministers were accountable to the Lord in heaven.

The symbolism is not that of a seven branched lampstand as in Israel's temple as though to signify a corporate unity of churches or of ministers, but of seven distinct lampstands severally responsible to the Lord. The vision did not disclose churches or ministers incorporated as a worldly organization. There is nothing in the New Testament to indicate the divine appointment or approval of much that is called union today. The only unifying bond between these churches was their spiritual relation to their heavenly Lord.

He was not in the midst of the church but of the churches. "The church" is used in Scripture of the complete body of Christ with its membership of individual believers, Jews and Gentiles, throughout the world. Thus it is said, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it", and "the church of the firstborn, written in heaven". Christ is the Head of the body, the church. He is also the Head of each local church, and of all the churches which "in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours". Even in the epistle to the Ephesians where the

representative relation of the church is the chief subject, the appointment by her ascended Lord of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the administrative edification of the churches on earth, finds significant mention. And it was to the angel of the church at Ephesus that the Lord directed His first letter. Might not the angels in the symbolism and the servants of the introductory verse, answer to such ministering oversight?

"The word 'church,'" says the unreliable Scofield Bible, "does not occur *again* (after ch. III) in the Revelation till all is fulfilled", the argument being that the church is removed to heaven before "these things" begin to come to pass. This is a common error with extreme dispensationalists. We read of "the churches", and it is signified clearly in the closing reference that to them "these things" were addressed. What is comprehended by "these things"? Surely all things testified by Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, in this Apocalypse from the beginning to the end. If Scofield and his company are correct this verse is out of place. It should have concluded chapter three where, as they would have us believe, the "things" concerning the church on earth finish. But at the beginning the Author directed the entire book to be sent to the churches, and here at its end is His corroboration. "These things" must, therefore, include the whole Apocalypse.

The word "church" is a continuation or application of an Old Testament term, "the congregation of the Lord"; it was localised (Acts VII 38), and in the midst of it the Lord vouchsafed His presence. Of old there were restrictions and prohibitions guarding admission and fellowship. The apostles were well acquainted with the term; it was not an innovation. Nor could they have dissociated it from the kingdom (Matt. XVI 18-19). Local churches with appropriate oversight will continue until the end when the kingdom shall come and His will be done on earth as in heaven. That is one significance of this directive. Accordingly with this agree the words of Hebrews X 19-27, where, to conclude several exhortations, we read, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is . . . and so much the more as ye see the day approaching", that is, the day of the Lord; and the continuing argument gives solemn warning that apostasy partakes of this forsaking the assembly or the church. The Book of Revelation presents that apostasy in all its aspects, characteristics and issues. Corresponding caution is given by the same apostle (I John II 8-10) concerning this feature of anti-Christian apostasy, namely, forsaking the assembly. How fitting, therefore, that this book should be sent to the churches and that when all had been written the pointer should be added which ratifies the whole. How agreeable also the fact that apostles wrote from the Lord in heaven by His Spirit epistles (e.g. Timothy, Titus) giving similar warning to local churches and their pastors, even as these churches are addressed through their angels or ministers appointed of the Lord. But how anomalous this apostolic forewarning if ecclesiastical and pastoral conditions on earth are to cease by the removal of all believers to heaven prior to the arrival of those times to which the admonitions relate, which would be the case were the popular but erroneous Darby-Scofield theory true!

Set in symbolism *seven* churches were selected in-

clusively to represent all the churches, because the conditions found in these exemplified conditions possible in all. While a suitable message is addressed to each respectively, the messages are intended for all, hence the seven-times repeated exhortation; "he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"; that is to say, it is intended that hearers in each church should heed the messages to all the churches. The promises of blessing which, while individually awarded, are addressed to the churches, all relate to the Coming and Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not at the end of an alleged parenthetical "church period", but at the seventh and last trumpet after the judgment of the Beast and his followers, thus further establishing the fact that "what the Spirit saith unto the churches" includes all "these things" throughout this Apocalypse to which the Lord directs in His closing admonition. This ministry of the Spirit also accords with the promise and prediction of our Lord written by this same apostle in his gospel concerning "another Comforter", Who would not speak from Himself, and Who would supply additional revelation of the things of Christ including things to come.

"These things" were not directed to the attention of ecclesiastical hierarchies, incorporated religious societies or associations, ministers' fraternals or social or youth movements, but to *the churches*. There is no suggestion of these angels combining to form a ministers' union with president and committees, humanly accredited, with state recognition. They were charged with the spiritual business of the churches under their glorified Head, and were content to be as stars in His hand. Extra-church organizations have served and may serve as a handmaid and help to the churches, or they may be found a handicap and hindrance. Churches are assemblies with settled faith and order and ministry, where believers are members one of another, confessed as their desire and intention mutually to observe the principles and ordinances. The appointment of angels and the placing or displacing of the lampstands are the recognition of this. "The saints in Christ Jesus with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. I), or again, "the church of God, them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus called saints" (I Cor. I). The engagements and exercises in assembly were stated historically at the beginning: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and the fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in the prayers" (the prayer meeting. Acts II).

This final directive of the Lord Jesus determines that the only human organizations on earth which He acknowledges as His Own institution, peculiarly responsible because specially related to Him, are *the churches*. All the things He testified were to and for the churches, though "these things" concerned not alone faith and order, but nations, rulers and governments, wars and rumours of wars, judgments and glories, things on earth and in heaven,—all was communicated to churches under His Headship, to these called-out gathered companies bound together in spiritual bonds because united in Himself. The monitions to the churches here selected were intended for all. Some had afforded hospitality to persons and doctrines whose influence and effect were to vitiate and disintegrate the spiritual life and unity of the assemblies, by which fusing the light became obscured or in danger of eclipse. "Thou hast left thy first love" was the first indictment, and in the last, the need of nothing, i.e. independence even of the Lord Himself! It is feasible that a slackening tendency in

one assembly might infect others unto the compromising elements of a broadening charity. It becomes inevitable as history and experience prove, when a policy of comprehension is followed, though with excellent intention unto the increase of the Kingdom of God; and especially when ministers holding divergent views on points of faith and order mutually conceded as non-fundamental in the interests of union, consent to remain silent thereon for the sake of maintaining such unity. A real insulation alone insures the continuance of unsullied light. "Evil associations corrupt good manners."

Admittedly the churches have a charge laid upon them to evangelize the world, and each assembly a responsibility to make Christ known in its own locality. Through His churches God is pleased to send forth His light and His truth; they are to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. But it is often overlooked that the first, and continuingly the foremost, privilege and duty of the churches is to bear their light *unto the Lord above*, in which way only they will effectively shine forth upon the darkened world around. In what measure do they walk in His light and reflect that light back to Himself and gain His approval? Extra-church organizations, denominational and inter-denominational, are of course actually beholden to the churches. Uniting churches or members of churches within their organizations, they may exercise an unsettling and divisive influence within the assemblies, claiming the loyalty of their supporters, thus enrolled, to proposals which their pastors and oversight must disapprove. Sometimes, and this is especially true where youth is concerned, the emphasis is placed upon service rather than worship; upon doing instead of learning; upon witnessing and team-work, the direction being to the world around instead of first to the church's Head above.

Our Lord in heaven is the faithful Witness and His churches on earth are to be composed of dutiful hearers. "I Jesus testify." Accordingly His blessing is announced for those who read and hear and observe His sayings. The *public* reading is intended, or the reader would himself be the only hearer; that is, the exposition of His Word in the churches. This is the appointed means through which gathered believers hear the testimony of their Lord. Albeit, not all in the churches "hear what the Spirit saith", only "he that hath ears to hear". Such will hear with a view to keeping Christ's sayings. They will not, as some, add to or take from these things. Nor will they substitute loyalty to some religious movement for loyalty to their local church. As the age advances and the predicted perilous times become poignantly real, human religious organizations may be dissolved by force of events, as some have been during the course of the churches' history; but churches will remain be they composed of but "two or three". The Lord's true people will find means of assembling themselves together. Loyalty, therefore, to the local church, that church itself being loyal to the Lord and to His Word, will be the believer's confession and expression of his loyalty to Christ Himself. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church of God, but the Lord's significant enquiry was, "Why persecutest thou *Me*?" The reverse also is true; love for His church is love to Christ Himself. Loyalty to Christ may be confused with loyalty to denominational associations and other institutions; and societies, missions, fellowships, unions and campaigns may be given labour and time, to the despising of the churches, and even belittling of their appointed ordered

procedure. The local church is likened to a body (see I Corinthians) and any neglecting of the body or its members is an affront to the Head. What shall be said of those who, being members of churches, without legitimate reason, rarely assemble? They disregard their Lord's injunction and wishes, and render a disservice to their fellow members by this neglecting of the body. Happy is the local church which finds her freedom and privilege and obligation in seeking to have Christ alone as her Head. Happy also the minister of Christ who seeks not honour from men, though indeed, the Lord may providentially bestow such honour; but is content with "the blessed ordination of the pierced hands". Happy are the members of a church who "remember and obey and salute them that have the rule", and "not forsaking the assembling of themselves together", "exhort one another, and so much the more as they see the Day approaching". Apostasy, the disavowal of Christ, may take the form of this very "forsaking" of the Divine institution—the churches. It is dangerously possible to be running after that which, having also much publicity and attractiveness, is even called by His name, and to persuade ourselves that thereby we do God service; the trend and tendency becoming an establishment, with dissociation eventually from local church life and fellowship. "Our gathering together unto Him" at His coming is the fruit, the end, the goal. By being "gathered together in His name" as He enjoined upon His disciples, "until He come", we become rooted, and are found in the way, and so prepared unto the great hope. If now we are absentees, may we not be found among those "ashamed before Him at His coming"? Therefore, "examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith", for *Christ instituted only churches*.

### "The Dayspring From On High"

THE coming into the world of a little Child, Whose birth the Christian world at this season will celebrate, is likened in the Scripture to the breaking of the day. When "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, in the days of Herod the king", a morning promiscuous of better things dawned upon a world that was in darkness and in the shadow of death. With His coming the word was fulfilled, "The dayspring from on high hath visited us." As we turn over this figure in our minds, it will remind us of what holy and happy days have their spring in Him in Whose praise, the first of all Christmas carols was sung.

#### I.

Christ is the Dayspring of righteousness. What darkness covered the earth, what gross darkness the minds of the people, until He came! He was born "in the days of Herod the king". How starless was the night until "His star" appeared! And what evils sported themselves in the darkness! When men became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened, and they were given up to vile affections, how soon did even their temples become like the midnight jungle, full of bestialized men, ill-omened birds of the night, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, and the dark places of the earth were full of the habitations of cruelty.

But while shepherds kept their flocks by night the angels heralded a new day:

"Who'll wait and watch the eastern skies  
Will see the glorious spears arise  
Beneath the oriflame of day."

From Bethlehem, morning broke upon the world, and in the manger men found a luminous Standard of righteousness from on high. In Him the Sun of righteousness arose with healing in His wings. How the creatures of the night fled before Him! With what healing power did He shine upon men and women whom the morning found bruised and bleeding, who had fallen in battle with the powers of the night!

And still He graciously fulfils His morning ministry. How dark is the heart unvisited by the Dayspring from on high! Inherent and secret sins are there like foul beasts in their native lair. Whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely and of good report, if they find access there, are like children lost in the forest and are soon rent in pieces by the wolves of sin. No tapers of our making, or ethical lamps of our invention, or fires of our kindling can lighten the native darkness of our hearts, or frighten evil from our minds. Only when the Dayspring doth visit us can light arise. Then vain thoughts take leave, sin is dragged forth to light, and by the healing rays which shine from Bethlehem and Calvary our wounded souls find life and health again.

That is the meaning of Christmas to the world: "The Dayspring from on high hath visited us".

#### II.

Christ is the Dayspring of peace. How troubled is the life unvisited by Christ! How untroubled is the night which is made by His absence! Who knows what horrors lie in this thick darkness! We know the brave attempt at illumination, the brave display of a feigned unconcern. But, "Watchman, what of the night?" What are the elements of human spiritual experience, when the soul is wrapped in this nocturnal pall, unrelieved, as yet, by the shining of "His star", or the first faint rays of His own uprising?

One element is spiritual ignorance, — a want of knowledge of spiritual things, of God, and His holiness, His nature and His dwelling, of His relation to men. And akin to this is uncertainty. Who knows his own nature and standing who is lost in the night? What foes may lurk in the darkness! Who shall say how far from the precipice he stands? And that uncertainty grows into anxiety. How threatening, how full of menace are all the strange noises of the night! Then anxiety deepens into fear, distressing, unnerving, paralysing, fear. "When Herod the king had heard these things he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him." And it is ever so until the Dayspring from on high appears. But what a morning of peace dawns upon the souls in whom Christ is formed the hope of glory! Fear departs with the night, and uncertainty gives place to assurance with the rising of the sun. Now how clearly defined is the road, and how bulwarked and buttressed with light is the once timorous soul when the Dayspring shines forth, and the shadows flee away! And with the morning the angel of peace draws nigh to guard and garrison our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

"It came upon the midnight clear,  
That glorious song of old,  
From angels bending near the earth  
To touch their harps of gold:  
'Peace on the earth, good will to men,  
From heaven's all gracious King!  
The world in solemn stillness lay,  
To hear the angels sing."

"Still through the cloven skies they come  
 With peaceful wings unfurled,  
 And still their heavenly music floats  
 O'er all the weary world;  
 Above its sad and lonely plains  
 They bend on hovering wing  
 And ever o'er its Babel sounds  
 The blessed angels sing."

### III.

"Joy cometh in the morning" when the Dayspring from on high visits the heart. All the beauty of the earth is dependent upon the sun. Of all the wonders of creation, nothing is beautiful until light arises. But then how speedily the spirit of heaviness is exchanged for the garment of praise. The very birds sing their welcome to the Dayspring; the flowers show their purple robes hung with jewels in His honour; and all the trees of the fields clap their hands. The earth is made new every morning, sorrow is turned into joy, and all creation is vocal with gladness when the Dayspring looks again upon the land and sea.

So is it in the soul on whom Christ lifts the light of His countenance. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. There is a new meaning in life, for all life is created anew. Little children, old men and women, beggars and princes, saints and sinners, equally with flowers and trees, and squalid slums and sylvan walks, become sources of joy to him who sees them in the light of Christmas morning. "The world by Christ's face lighted is", and it is filled with joy.

### IV.

And all this is summed up in this: Christ is the Dayspring of Eternal Life; for life, in its divine meaning, is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. These are elements of life: the righteousness He first imputes and then imparts; the peace He makes and then bestows; the joy He finds and then divides with us; these are the constituents of His unspeakable gift of life eternal.

The day Christ makes can never weary by its brightness—"neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat". Notwithstanding, it can know no evening shadows, for "there shall be no night there". This Dayspring will not waken little children too early from their slumbers, but He will rise upon them to give them light to put on the beautiful garments of His providing, and to guide their feet into the way of peace. Nor will old men weary of His ascending glory, for He is the Fount of eternal youth, and brings life and immortality to light in the gospel.

Has the Dayspring visited you? He comes not as the lightning, but gently and quietly as the dawn. Has Christ dawned upon you? Has the day of righteousness begun? Have you learned in His light your sinfulness? Have you turned to Him for help?

Has the day of peace dawned upon you? Have the turbulent waves subsided? Is there calm in your conscience? Do you find strength in quietness and confidence?

And have you come to the morning of joy? Has the heavenly wind blown upon you? Have you breathed deeply of the Spirit of purity and grace? With the cool of Heaven's breeze upon your spirit, has the Dayspring come to your soul, making it a garden filled with flowers immortal? If so, your feet are set in the path of the just, which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day".

## "The Star Went Before Them"

THE star, which they saw in the east, went before them, and came and stood over where the young child was." The wealth and wonder of the advent of the Incarnate God can never be exhausted by human tongue or pen. Yet, deep as is the well itself, he must be a genius indeed who would find a new path, or angle of approach, to this wellside from which all people, and nations, and languages, have drawn comfort for nearly twenty centuries.

But a writer, like a preacher, often finds his opportunity in his readers' or hearers' forgetfulness,—

"Tell me the story often, for I forget so soon,  
 The early dew of morning has passed away at noon."

Ah, no! Few of us have learned the Christmas lesson even imperfectly; many, though hearing it often, have not learned it at all. Shall we join the company of the wise men, and follow the star—"His star"—again? It may be that old truths will seem new to us again, and we may find use at last in true worship for our treasures of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. At all events, though the world is growing old, we shall find the manger-cradle's message a prophecy of perpetual youth, the old world's deepest interest is still in "the young Child".

### I.

The guiding star perpetually abides a minister of light and leading to every seeking soul. We have no astronomical explanation. We are not concerned about the science of the story. Any or every star might have left its course, and might well have been regarded by the other countless starry worlds with holy envy for being sent upon so great a mission. Any star would have done His bidding, for "he made the stars also".

But the important thing is this: though salvation, in all the height and depth and length and breadth of its meaning was found in the Babe of Bethlehem, some never found their way to that shrine. The kings and the great men of the world, and even scribes and Pharisees, learned in all religious lore, did not know when Christmas morning dawned. Their hearts were foreign to the spirit of Christmas. They were hard and selfish, and wholly self-centred. They did not hear the angels sing, nor did they see the light in the sky. Living within a short distance of the scene of the world's great Wonder, they knew not of it.

So is it still. Only a few really keep Christmas; only a few find the young Child and His mother: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

Yet always the star is shining to lead us to Christ, or the angels are waiting to tell us where to find Him. That is the meaning of Christmas, that no one now need grope their way to God. If men are wise they will see the star. That is a wonderful truth—that the darkness is past, and the true Light now shineth. That is the gospel, that a Light kindled from the skies is shining, that a Star which no currents of the lower air, no powers of the heavenly places, can extinguish, waits to lead men to Christ. If you have not found Christ, you have not seen the star, or, seeing, have failed to follow its leading.

That is true also of those who, having found Him, would yet know Him more perfectly. We do well to enquire at Jerusalem and of the scribes, where Christ should be born. But there is always light enough for those who want to find their way to Beth-



lehem. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

## II.

Consider how the star leads to Christ and to Christmas. In the first place, the star stood over the place where the spirit of childhood was. And you will always find Christ there. There is a spirit that is alien to that of childhood. It is suspicious, insincere, proud, and unspiritual. You will never meet Christ as a debutante presented at court. Until you can worship a Babe in a manger, you will never be a Christian.

Then, very literally, Christ is often found in a young child still. There is no diviner ministry than that which takes care of little children. Some of you who read this have lost your way. The star stood over the young child, and you did not recognize the Child. You had no place in your heart for Him. You did not minister to Him; and you thereby missed the wise men's joy.

A Christian reader may have missed his way—not for want of the star, nor yet for want of following it, but because he failed to see Christ in the child over whose head it stood. Spiritual declension often dates from failing interest in the ministry to children.

At this Christmas season, how surely the star leads us to the children. Christmas, of all seasons, belongs to the children. Let no one make light of their joys. No one who follows the star can miss the young child. There was a beautiful story of a chauffeur who nearly ran over a little boy in Toronto. He had turned his

car, and then a second time stopped suddenly, and the rear of the car swung round and knocked the little fellow down. But when the driver saw that he was not hurt, he jumped from his car, picked the child up in his arms and "hugged and kissed him"—so the paper said. And then, for very joy, collapsed and had to be driven home. How many children have we almost injured! Let us do them good. Follow the star, and the children will have a merry Christmas.

Then, too, they who followed the star left their first Christmas presents at a cradle in the home of the poor. Do we find ourselves similarly led? Many will be surfeited with good things. The star did not stand over Herod's palace, nor yet over the inn, but only over the stable—and there the wise men found heaven. So do you follow the star! Tell nobody about it. Go yourself if you can with your treasures of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

You remember old Scrooge? His heartless, loveless, bitter Christmas eve? And you remember how Marley's ghost came to him, and then the ghosts of Christmas Past, and of Christmas Present, and of Christmas Yet To Come? And he saw what he had missed, what he was missing, and what he might miss for ever. Then he wakened Christmas morning and found he was not too late—and, a new man, followed the star and made everybody — Bob Cratchitt and all the little Cratchitts — happy and helped to answer the prayer of Tiny Tim, "God bless us every one".

So may we follow the star to the souls and the homes of the poor, and in all little children see again the image of the Babe of Bethlehem, and find our heaven in their joy.

# THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE SANCTIFICATION

A Bible Lecture by Dr. T. T. Shields

Sixteenth in a Series of Week-Evening Lectures on the Doctrines of Grace

Delivered in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Thursday Evening, May 7th, 1931

(Stenographically Reported)

Lesson read: I Corin. 1:26-31; I Peter 1:1, 2; II Thess. 1:1-3; Romans 6:1-13.

I HAVE read these verses merely as being suggestive of the general subject of sanctification. It is sometimes possible to learn most clearly by contrast. Frequently the Scripture states a truth both positively and negatively: "By grace are we saved through faith; and that not of yourselves"; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

The Scripture teaches both the positive and the negative side of things: what we are to believe, and what we are not to believe; what we are to do, and some things we are not to do.

## I.

I desire you to think for a minute of this principle of sanctification in contrast with two other principles represented by two great words: the relation of sanc-

tification to justification, and to regeneration. We are justified by faith, it is said. Justification is an instantaneous act of God whereby the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, and for His sake, on the ground of what He is, and what He has done, we are given legal standing before God; we are declared to be righteous, looked upon as though we were righteous because the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to our account.

"Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness." So, as we believe, the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to our account, and in God's sight we are justified. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Justification is instantaneously completed. All that Christ is is reckoned to us, and we are regarded as being complete in Him.

But it is something *done for us* entirely *apart from*

us. It is, so to speak, a piece of divine book-keeping where the merit of God is put against our demerit; His righteousness against our unrighteousness; the value of His precious blood against our moral indebtedness to God's law incurred by our sins. Thus the books are balanced, and we are esteemed righteous.

Regeneration is something which God does *in us*—not for us, but something which God does in us: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ye who were dead are made alive by an act of God, by the regenerating power of the life-giving Spirit.

Under another figure the same act of regeneration is set forth as a new birth: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." We are "born again by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." Regeneration is something which the Spirit of God does in us. When instantaneously a new life is imparted, when eternal life is given, the "old man" that was dead to God is made alive to Him. Being in Christ, he becomes a new creation: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

But sanctification is equally an act of God, for we are saved by grace, and salvation in every aspect of it is a work of grace. It is something which God does, and not something we do for ourselves. But sanctification is the continuous work of the Spirit of God in the regenerate soul. It is not something that is accomplished in a moment: it is the long process of the education of the soul. Regeneration is the birth: we are born again; we become as new-born babes; and now, having been born, we are to grow up, we are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". Regeneration is the birth of the soul: sanctification is the education, the training, the discipline, of the soul; so that while justification and regeneration are instantaneous acts of God, sanctification represents the work of the Spirit of God from the moment of that new birth until we are perfected in glory.

## II.

Look at the principle IN CONNECTION WITH SOME OF THE FIGURES USED IN SCRIPTURE to set forth the great boon of salvation. When we were speaking of the doctrine of eternal life a couple of weeks ago we examined these scriptural metaphors, because the Holy Ghost never uses a figure that is inappropriate. —

We are said to be "babes in Christ". The Christian begins his life as a babe—not full-grown, but he is born from above. And as all his powers must be gradually developed—and as they are developed—they must be trained, instructed, disciplined, directed to proper uses. It is important that souls should be born: it is equally important that, having been thus born of the Spirit, they should be put to school, and that they should be trained by the divine Tutor that they may grow up into Christ in all things. Thus at conversion we are enrolled in the school of Christ, and from then until we are brought into His immediate presence, and redemption is complete, we are to grow in grace and in His knowledge.

Indeed, I very much question whether in all the ages to come we shall ever come to a place where our renewed spirits will become stagnant and static. I believe we have abundant teaching in the Word of God

to the effect that the Christian life in all the ages to come will be one of continual enlargement and enrichment; for He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

A little boy who passes his first examination at school is very proud of himself. He comes home and shows his mother what he has done, the pictures he has drawn, his writing exercises, and so on. He does not know as yet that he has scarcely entered the portal of learning, that he is still upon the threshold. If that boy should live to be an old man, and should spend all his life in learning, at the end you would find him as humble as a child, confessing "that he knew very little."

I have heard a story of a great Greek scholar. He gave practically his whole life to the study of one Greek verb. When reaching the end he lamented that he had not confined himself to one particular tense. I do not know whether that story is historical or apocryphal, but it illustrates the truth. If we have been born into the divine family, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious, we have a long course before us, an extended career awaits our taking advantage of it. It is a great privilege to be enlisted, to be enrolled in the school of Christ. I hope no one will count that he has apprehended, or that he has attained to that for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus. There is far more in the Christian life than that.

Take another figure, that of *the vine and the branches*. The branches are grafted into the vine. They are brought into contact with each other, the branch is wrapped about, and so, artificially, by an act from without, it is attached to the vine. That is justification. When we believe in Jesus Christ, by an act of God we are brought to Him, we are reckoned to be in Him, we are esteemed righteous. But presently the branch and the vine are united, and the life-tide of the vine establishes contact with the branch and begins to flow out into the branch, and thus the branch and the parent stalk are vitally united. They become one in life. That is regeneration.

When the soul is quickened, the life of God is imparted to the dead soul. Presently that life which comes from the roots, up through the stem into the vine, and out into the branch, begins to manifest itself, first with leaves and then with small green grapes, and by and by with some great luscious clusters of Eshcol. That is sanctification: when the life of God in the soul begins to manifest itself in character and life, and we are "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord".

Consider another figure: *the casting of the wheat into the ground*. The reception of the seed by the soil, the opening of the heart to the reception of the truth, belief in Christ, synchronizes with justification. We saw that there was some seed which the sower sowed which was not received. It lay on the surface of the soil until the birds carried it away. But that which fell on good ground was received by the soil and became part of it. So Christ is received into the heart by faith. We receive the truth "in the love of it". The seed is the word: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." That is justification.

Then presently the rain descends, and the dew and

the sunshine are given, and the earth is warmed. Nature begins her work, and the seed germinates; the life that is in it begins to move. That is regeneration. We are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever."

Presently there appears above the surface of the soil a tiny green blade, and it grows, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." That is sanctification. The growth of the divine life in the soul manifesting itself at last without.

Let us take another figure, that of *the lost sheep*. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." A certain man had a hundred sheep, and one of them went astray. He left the ninety and nine in the wilderness and went out after the lost one "until he found it". The finding of the sheep, the establishing of contact with it, the laying hold of it: that is justification. The moment the Shepherd finds the sheep it is safe.

Then he layeth it on his shoulder as though it were one with himself, and the two become one and are united: that is analogous to regeneration, the union of two in one, so that "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."

And when he has so done he cometh home. The shepherd coming home through the dark valley, skirting the edge of the precipice, safely passing the lair of the lion and of the bear, and through the place where the wolves are howling, until at last he reaches the fold,—that journey, from the finding of the sheep, until at evening time it is safely folded where no harm can ever befall it, is illustrative of the work of the Spirit of God in the regenerated soul. In sanctification He is coming home, and is bringing us safely with Him.

Let me put beside that figure such texts as these: "And the same day there were added to the church such as were being saved." Our version has it, "such as should be saved". There is a sense in which we are saved, of course, as we have seen, and are eternally secure in Christ Jesus. But there is another sense in which, from day to day throughout our life, we are "being saved". Another text tells us that "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God." In that process of sanctification we live in a daily experience of his power, we are "being saved". Salvation is a continuous thing which goes on into the glory.

Suppose I take another figure, that of *the bridegroom and the bride*. What is justification? The Bridegroom's proposal and acceptance; receiving His word, resting upon it; from the human side, saying "I will" to Christ, and then the answering love, "We love him because he first loved us." Not only so, but "we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." When the Holy Ghost takes possession of the renewed soul he sheds abroad the love of the divine Bridegroom in our hearts, so that the bride answers to the Bridegroom's affection, and they become for ever one. When thus they are betrothed, and thus they prove each to be the affinity of the other, the bride begins to prepare for the wedding. That is sanctification: getting all the fine robes made,

putting on her jewels, the presents of her Beloved, getting ready for that day when it shall be said, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride hath made herself ready." Changing the figure, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." That is sanctification.

### III.

WHY, THEN DO WE NEED TO BE SANCTIFIED? Why is sanctification necessary? First of all, because we have a dual nature. There is the "old man" and the "new". The unregenerated man is all "old man": the regenerated man is both "new man" and "old man." When God, by His providential decree, determined to take the kingdom from Saul and give it to David, thereafter it is said that "David waxed stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker." Saul steadily declined in power; the number of his followers diminished; while David increased in favour with the people, and in authority over them. Thus we are to "put off the old man with his deeds", and "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

The "old man" is still with us, I fear, and we need this process of sanctification in order to the subjugation of the latent evil that is within us, and the development and ultimate completion of the divine qualities that are potentially imparted to us when we are quickened into newness of life by the power of the divine Spirit.

I should like to try, though I do not know how far I may succeed, to make clear to you that *it is God's way, not only to solicit but to secure, the cooperation of the soul He saves*. The relation of faith and regeneration is very difficult to determine. One is the act of man, and he can tell when he believed; the other is the act of God, and the secret and mystery of that is with Him. He quickens me when I believe—or is it that I believe because He has quickened me? The two seem to be simultaneous, but we are sure of this, that nobody is saved who does not believe, and the Lord secures that act of faith in some way by the operation of His Spirit as a condition of salvation. Viewed from one point of view, faith is the first-fruit of salvation; but every person here who is a Christian knows that there was a time when God enabled you, by the operation of His Spirit within you, to yield yourself to Christ and say, "I trust Him." It may be that for long months and years God seemed to be waiting for that act of surrender on your part.

In the beginning, when God created man, He made him in His own image and after His own likeness. He never intended that we should be mere puppets, mere automatons. I have heard people try to illustrate both the act of justification and the state of sanctification by speaking of being yielded to God as a cup is yielded to the hand of the one who drinks from it, and being yielded to God as an axe is yielded to the hands of the woodman, or the sword to the hand of the warrior. But we need to learn that analogies of that sort are not perfect, for the simple reason that I am more than a cup, more than an inanimate axe, more than a sword. I was made in God's image and likeness. I have a

memory, a judgment, an imagination, a heart, and a will. I am not a thing of mere clay. There is more than that in a man. Everyone of us is aware that he has volitional powers. I can say 'yes' or 'no'. I can go east or west, north or south.

Tennyson says,—

"Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest, manhood Thou:  
Our wills are ours, we know not how;  
Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

That is true. They are ours. There is a sort of will within a will that enables a man by divine grace to surrender to God. If God made us to be thinking, judging, imagining, remembering, loving, willing creatures, when He saves us He will provide a way of salvation which will be in harmony with our complex natures. A man will not be required to stultify himself and cease to be a man when he comes to Christ. He will not be required to suspend his reason, to quench his imagination, to put aside his judgment, to ignore his affectional nature, or to shackle his will. When he acts, he will act with a glorious freedom. He will do it because he wants to do it, because he loves to do it; and every power that God has given him will be touched and illuminated and energized by the Divine-Spirit so that the whole man will be acting with a glorious harmony and moving toward Christ.

However rich a father may be, however wise and skilful, he knows that that little child, in growing up to be a man, must somehow be taught to exercise his own powers. He knows that he cannot be taught to walk by any mechanical means: he must learn to walk by walking. He knows he cannot be taught to read by superimposing anything upon that childish brain. He knows that the teacher must secure the cooperation of the child. The child gradually learns to think and remember, until by and by, by the very act of doing these things, the mind is enlarged and the infant becomes a boy, and later the boy grows into a youth, the youth becomes a man; and when he becomes a man he puts away childish things. But he has not only grown in his physical stature: he has grown and developed in his mental powers.

In the same way the Spirit of God sanctifies the soul. He does not instantly say, "You are ready for heaven." Someone says, "But are we not justified freely by His grace, and robed in His righteousness?" Yes; but we have all eternity to live with God, and generally He takes an extended period in which to educate us for that high vocation. Sanctification is as necessary to our completion, to our growing up into the likeness of Christ, as the education and training of the natural mind is necessary to the development of the babe into the boy, and the boy into the youth, and the youth into the young man.

Being a Christian is a big business. A little boy said to me one day—a little boy of thirteen or fourteen years, and I had a pretty good idea where he had been—"I have been doing so-and-so since I got my sanctification"!

What is education? Cramming the mind with knowledge? Cramming the memory with facts? No! There are plenty of men going to school like that. Our colleges and universities are full of them. They come out with high standing, and yet have not even learned to think.

I heard a lawyer tell of a man's coming into his office for a position. When asked what he could do, he replied, "Anything." "Where do you come from?" He learned he was a gold medalist of Cambridge University, and from his papers it appeared he had had a magnificent record in the university. "What can you do?" "Anything." The lawyer, telling the story, said, "That was perfectly true. He could do anything—but earn a living!" He was no use to anybody.

That same man told another story. He said, "When I was in London a little boy used to sell papers on the corner of Dundas and Richmond Streets. His father died when he was young, and the mother had to earn a living. At ten years of age this little chap, after school hours—and before school hours—and all through the summer was busy selling papers. He is just thirty years of age now, and he is the manager of a great railway system in South America. He receives thirty thousand dollars a year for his labour. You can put him anywhere at all, and he makes good."

He was an educated man. He had learned to think. Education is not something that is done outside a man, it is not something that is done for him by somebody-else: all that education can do is to assist in the development of a man's own powers,—literally, leading him out.

Do you know what the Holy Ghost is sent to be? He is sent to be a Private Tutor to every one of us, to make sure that we may be well educated and fit to live in a palace. That is what sanctification is, just going on with God.

#### IV.

Just a word as to HOW IT IS EFFECTED: in the first place, you will anticipate me by saying it is all in Christ. Everything is in Christ. We have nothing apart from Christ Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." All that is necessary to our entire sanctification is in Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Having purposed to bring us to that high state of perfection He made full provision for us. He laid up in Christ Jesus all spiritual blessings which are to be ours as we live in the heavenly places in Christ.

In our schools, because we are so limited in our knowledge, we have somebody to teach us English, and somebody else to teach mathematics, and still another to teach geography, science, languages, and so on; because it is too much to expect any one person to be expert in everything. Each one must become a specialist in his own department. Hence if a man is to be really educated he must take advantage of the combined knowledge of a whole staff of teachers. How would you like to have one professor who knows everything? How would you like to have one teacher who knows more than could be put in the Encyclopaedia Britannica and all other encyclopaedia? How would you like to have a teacher to whom no question could be put that he could not answer?

A friend told me that he heard Dr. Joseph Cook, the great lecturer who spent much of his time lecturing

to university students, before the days when universities were shut against orthodox men, stand on a platform in a great university and say, "Now, students, or gentlemen of the faculty either, ask me any question you like, and I will answer it." I do not know whether, if Professor Einstein had been there, he could have answered some of his questions or not! But I know you may ask Jesus Christ any question, and He can answer it, because in Him "dwelleth all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

He is made to us sanctification—but how? Who is the Sanctifier? Jesus Christ is in heaven. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. He comes to enlighten our understanding, and to energize our wills, and to work in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure".

I have been in some of the large art galleries of the world, in Paris, in London, and other places; and wherever one goes where the works of the great masters are assembled he will find students with their easels and canvasses sitting before a great painting, trying to copy it. I have stood and looked at them in some cases where the picture was nearing completion, and, comparing the original with the copy, have said to myself, "The form is there, and the colour. It is a fair imitation, but somehow it lacks—it lacks—it lacks that which distinguishes the masterpiece from all others." Why does it lack it? Because it is the work of another, not the master. But if the one who painted that masterpiece could come back and put his spirit into the student sitting before the canvas and say, "I will paint that picture over again for you", I imagine, as the picture grew in beauty and completeness at least you would have to say, "I declare, they are just alike; I cannot tell them apart."

That is what sanctification is. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord." The very Spirit of Christ comes to dwell in us, in order that we may live out the great masterpiece of all the ages, even the life and character of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are a long way from it, my dear friends, and not until we get to the glory can the work be completed; but it will be complete there. That is sanctification. Thus the power by which it is effected is the Holy Ghost.

How is it done? By the appropriation of Christ to ourselves by faith. Faith is the instrumental cause of our sanctification. What do I mean? I mean that just as I see in Christ, not only my Saviour, but my Exemplar, my Master, my Lord, and as I appropriate all that is in Him to myself, the Spirit of God will enable me to actualize these things in my own spirit. It is by faith, but this is the means which God employs.

What do you know about Christ? Nothing apart from the Book. What do you know about the will of God? Nothing apart from the Book. What do you know about the divine pattern, what God wants you to be? Nothing apart from the Book. What do you know about the divine plan for you in respect to any course possible or contemplated? any act of life, any thought of the mind, any word that may escape the lips? How do you know what you ought to do, and what you ought not to do? You cannot know apart from the Bible.

Do not assume "I have the Spirit, and I know I am

all right." There is nothing that arouses my indignation more than when people come to me and prate about having the Holy Ghost, and thus being a law unto themselves, saying, "I have prayed; now get out of my way." Many people have prayed — and played the fool afterward. There is only one way of knowing whether that inward impulse is from above or from below, and that is by trying the spirits, "whether they be of God". If they are in agreement with the Book, you may be sure the Holy Ghost is with you.

There will be no perfection here. There are two extremes: on the one hand there is what theologians call antinomianism, a doctrine to the effect that inasmuch as we are saved by the righteousness of Another, it makes no difference how we live. It is to that the apostle refers in the opening of the sixth chapter of Romans: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? If the more I sin, the more I am forgiven, if I am saved by grace alone apart from works, shall I continue in sin that grace may abound? No! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

On the other hand, there are perfectionists who argue that they have no "old man", that there is no old nature left. It is entirely eradicated now; they are wholly free from sin. I have seen much of that, and I am going to give you a bit of advice. If anybody says that to you, watch them. The most crooked people I have met with in my life, almost without exception, have been found among people who claim perfection. "I have no old man", they say, "any wrong in me is all of the devil; the devil does it." Then there is much of the devil in them if that be so!

I met a company of Australian soldiers in a restaurant in London. My table was near, and I suppose they thought I looked as though I could not quite complete my meal without a cigarette, so one of them offered me one. I thanked him, and told him that I never smoked. We got into conversation about the war (it was during the last year of the war), and I asked them if they had had any contact with the Americans. They said they had, and I asked them, "What about them? What sort of soldiers are they?" "They are fine fellows, but, like the rest of us, they have to learn by experience. We got into a bad mess one day following them." "Oh", I said, "how was that? Tell me about it." "Well," said the spokesman, "they were ordered to advance. They swept their piece of terrain clear. They supposed that the enemy had given way quickly. We were in the rear, and were ordered to follow them. As we were going across this piece of territory that was supposed to be free from the enemy, the enemy fired from the rear, and instantly we had two hundred casualties."

These raw troops went over the top saying "This is easy." They might have said they were sanctified. But they had not mopped up. I said to them, "Tell me about it. What does 'mopping up' mean? They replied, "When a certain army or brigade has made an advance, another company comes from behind and goes into every hole and dugout. They blow them up with bombs, until they are absolutely sure there is not an enemy left behind them."

I have seen many people who have failed to "mop up". The man who was a swearer, when his tongue was made clean, thought he was a saint all through. Another had

been addicted to drink, and when he stopped that he fancied himself perfect,—in short, he made clean the outside of the cup and the platter and called that sanctification. Then something that had not been dealt with at all, "the old man" with all his carnal covetousness, suddenly manifests itself. There are casualties in that man's life. Then he became humbler and he began to understand what Paul meant when he said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

We are not perfect. Be careful. You remember how the robbers used to do in England? Sometimes when the doors were barred and the windows bolted, and nobody could get in at all, they would climb up to the top of the house and let a little boy down the chimney, and he would unlock the door from the inside. You had better watch your chimney, for the enemy will get in and open the door from within, and only as the Spirit of God is regnant within us, and we yield ourselves to Him, can we be victorious.

## News of Union Churches

Acting Secretary—H. C. SLADE

### Ordination of Veteran Missionary

At the invitation of Briscoe Street Baptist Church, London, representatives from sixteen Baptist churches, met to consider the advisability of setting apart Douglas T. Hume to the gospel ministry.

Mr. Hume is no novice in the work of the Lord. After serving as missionary in Africa for 26 years, he saw the opportunity for Christian service in the Westminster Township, south of London. Since the war, many new homes have been built in this rapidly growing district, and the Mission, now under Mr. Hume's leadership gives every indication of soon becoming a strong Regular Baptist work.

To the satisfaction of the Council, Mr. Hume gave a clear and comprehensive statement of his conversion, call to the ministry and doctrinal beliefs. All who heard the statement were thoroughly convinced that the candidate was a man of God, wholly devoted to the service of Christ, and one through whom the Word of God is given daily expression, both in character and testimony.

We rejoice in the fellowship of Mr. Hume, also his devoted wife, who for so many years laboured with him in Africa.

Our Union Churches all join in wishing him every blessing as he faithfully ministers the Word in his new sphere of labour.—H.C.S.

### Conversions Among French-Canadians

In spite of great difficulties and sometimes severe hardships, which our missionaries are called upon to endure, the Lord continues to bless their faithful testimony among the French-Canadians to the salvation of souls.

Mr. Leslie Barnhardt, who only a few weeks ago sold out his large business in Rouyn, Quebec, to enter into full-time Christian service, sends the following good news: "We have much cause to rejoice these days, in the abundant mercy, loving kindness and goodness of our Lord and Saviour. As recent as this past week, we have seen two young men, (French-Canadians) come to Christ and openly confess Him. At our Open Air last night, the presence of God was manifest and we had a great time as a goodly number stood and listened to the glorious Gospel. At all our services, the presence of our Lord Jesus is very real to us.

"This past week, Mr. Heron and I, had the privilege of making another trip into the great district of Temiskaming, and it is wonderful the way that God is opening

the door into that needy field. We had the joy of hearing another man express to us his assurance of eternal life in Christ. Mr. Dailleire, the man that was saved on our first trip, is standing true to the faith, and is daily witnessing to his neighbours of his great joy in Christ."

The paper, published in French by Rev. J. R. Boyd of Sudbury, called, *La Voix de l'Evangile* (The Voice of the Gospel) is constantly increasing in its circulation. It carries a definite Gospel message for every French-Canadian and recently several more of its readers made professions of faith in Christ. One of these expresses his simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ in the following words: "I gladly entrust myself, by faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that His blood has paid my debt of sin. I believe that He lives now as my High Priest in heaven, and give myself to Him to save and keep me safe for ever." (Signed) Mr. Adelard Jacques.—H.C.S.

## THE WHOLE SUM OF SALVATION

WHEN we see that the whole sum of our salvation, and every single part of it, are comprehended in Christ, we must beware of deriving even the minutest portion of it from any other quarter. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that He possesses it; if we seek any other gifts of the spirit, we shall find them in his unction; strength in his government; purity in his conception; indulgence in his nativity, in which he was made like us in all respects, in order that he might learn to sympathise with us: if we seek redemption, we shall find it in his passion; acquittal in his condemnation; remission of the curse in his cross; satisfaction in his sacrifice; purification in his blood; reconciliation in his descent to hell; mortification of the flesh in his sepulchre; newness of life in his resurrection; immortality also in his resurrection; the inheritance of a celestial kingdom in his entrance in to heaven; protection, security, and the abundant supply of all blessings, in his kingdom; secure anticipation of judgment in the power of judging committed to him. — In fine, since in him all kinds of blessings are treasured up, let us draw a full supply from him, and none from any other quarter.

—Calvin's *Institutes*, Book II, Chap. XVI.

## Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 12 Fourth Quarter Lesson 13 December 26, 1948

OLIVE L. CLARK, Ph.D. (Tor.)

### CHRISTMAS STORY

Lesson Text: Luke 2:1-20.

Golden Text: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—Lk. 2:11.

I. The Census: verses 1-7.

God sent His Son to a people who were divinely prepared for His coming. Throughout Old Testament times the Jews had received revelations from God through His prophets and priests, and by means of laws and ceremonies, types and symbols, words and works, all of which paved the way for the full disclosure of God in Christ (1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 1:1, 2). John the Baptist was chosen to be the immediate fore-runner of the Messiah (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5; Matt. 3:1-3; Lk. 1:76-80). The prophecies concerning the advent of the Redeemer had become more and more specific as the time of their fulfilment drew near, and devout souls, hearkening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, were longing intensely and expectantly for the promised consolation of Israel (Lk. 2:25, 26, 36-38).

The Roman world was chosen by the divine Director to

provide the setting for the most stupendous drama of human history. It was not by chance that Caesar Augustus should be ruling over a vast and united empire. One in government and language, one in its network of highways and lines of communication, it became an ideal vehicle for the spread of Christianity. As Caesar Augustus set his seal to the proclamation which decreed that a census should be taken which would include the population and property of every city, village and district of the Roman world, how little he thought that he was just a pawn in the hand of the Supreme Ruler of the universe!

This census was decreed for the destined year; God's time to manifest His Son had now arrived (Mk. 1:15; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 1:2, 3; 1 Pet. 1:20). From the papyri of the times we learn that such a census was taken periodically to serve as a basis of taxation.

The regulation that each Roman citizen should enroll in the city of his own tribe must have seemed unnecessary and inconvenient to many, but this was God's way of bringing His servants to the sacred town of Bethlehem, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:4-6; John 7:42).

Here, too, was circumstantial evidence for future generations that Christ was indeed the lineal descendant of David, as had been prophesied (2 Sam. 7:12, 13; Isa. 9:7; 16:5; Lk. 1:32, 69). If, as is probable, the genealogy of Joseph is given in Matthew 1:1-17 and that of Mary in Luke 4:23-38, we see why they were both required to register in Bethlehem, the city of David (Matt. 1:1; 16, 20; Lk. 1:26, 27).

Notwithstanding the fact that Christ was the eternal Son of God, God manifested in human form (John 1:14, 18; Col. 1:19; 2:9), and that He was of the royal seed of David according to the flesh, He came to us in deep humility. Travellers to Palestine tell us that even today there are annexes to the inns and other dwelling-places, large rooms on the ground floor with doors opening out into the street, similar in plan to the garages which adjoin many modern houses. These rooms were readily accessible to the animals, especially the goats and donkeys. In some such humble place the Christ-child was born. Born for our redemption, He lived a sacrificial life that He might die a sacrificial death (Heb. 2:7-11; 14-18). The child born for us at Bethlehem was the Son given for us at Calvary (Isa. 9:6). He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh; He knew the pangs of human physical weakness, suffering and sorrow (Matt. 8:20; John 4:6; 11:35; 19:28; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:15).

II. The Chorus: verses 8-14.

Only a heavenly choir could teach men the new song of salvation from sin which the advent of the Saviour made possible (Exod. 15:2; Psa. 118:14; Isa. 12:2, 3; Rev. 5:9; 14:3, 4). No mortal could by his own reasoning have discovered the way to God (Jon. 2:9; John 14:6), but angels, whose interest in man's salvation is great (Job 38:6, 7; Lk. 15:7, 10; 1 Pet. 1:12; Rev. 5:11, 12), heralded the glad tidings.

Dazzled by the radiant glory, the shepherds might have thought it was all a dream which would fade with the morning light, had they not been given a token that the tidings were true. They would find a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Surely this was a strange sign of Deity (Lk. 2:34)! How utterly unlike the spectacular signs which worldlings demanded (Matt.

27:40-44; Mk. 8:11, 12; Lk. 11:16; 23:8; John 2:18; 6:30)! And yet, the Incarnation was a stupendous miracle—the infinite God veiling Himself in the flesh of a little child.

III. The Child: verses 15-20.

The humble shepherds have pointed out to us the way in which the word of the Lord is to be received. They listened in Godly fear to the evangel proclaimed by the angels (Lk. 8:15; Acts 8:6), recognizing that the message was from the Lord (Acts 10:33; 1 Thess. 2:13). Not satisfied with a mere intellectual knowledge of the good news, they made a personal investigation for themselves (John 4:39-42; Acts 17:11). When once they were convinced that the message was true, they declared it to others (Acts 4:20, 29; 2 Cor. 4:13). They also glorified and praised God for the wonderful revelation which He had given them of a holy Saviour Who had been born in Bethlehem (Psa. 106:12; Matt. 2:10, 11). So may we all bow our hearts before the Christ of God and reverently adore Him (Psa. 95:2; 100:2; 106:12).

Mary of Nazareth treasured in her heart the memory of her sacred experiences (vv. 19, 51). They were too holy and too deep for utterance; and even for understanding. Rapturous joys and poignant griefs were strangely mingled for the one whom God had chosen to be the mother of our Lord (Lk. 1:28-56; 2:34, 35).

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

- Dec. 20—Prophecy of the Name of the Virgin Born ..... Isa. 7:1-14.
- Dec. 21—Prophecy of the Birth of Christ ..... Mic. 5:1-3.
- Dec. 22—Prophecy of the Time of the Birth of Christ ..... Dan. 9:20-25.
- Dec. 23—The Christmas Story in Matthew ..... Matt. 1:18-25.
- Dec. 24—The Annunciation by Gabriel ..... Lk. 1:26-37.
- Dec. 25—The Magnificat of Mary ..... Lk. 1:46-56.
- Dec. 26—The Symbolic Gifts of the Magi ..... Matt. 2:1-12.

SUGGESTED HYMNS

O little town of Bethlehem! Hark! the herald angels sing. Angels, from the realms of glory. Oh come, all ye faithful! Once in Royal David's city. While shepherds watched.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

THE Book of Acts was written by the historian Luke, and like his Gospel, was addressed to Theophilus (Compare Acts 1:1, 2 with Luke 1:1-4).

Luke evidently had in mind the same aim as in the Gospel; namely, to give Theophilus sure ground for faith in the message of the Gospel which had been delivered. Luke speaks of himself as an eye-witness and sharer in the events related in the latter part of the book, as shown by the frequent use of the pronoun "we" in the narrative (for example, 16:10; 20:6; 27:1). The record was divinely inspired and preserved.

The Gospel of Luke contains an account of "all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up." The Book of Acts records all that Jesus continued to do and teach, for it contains the history of His ministry as it was carried on through the Holy Spirit. Christ purchased our salvation on the cross, and the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ to the hearts of men. "The Book of the Acts of the Apostles" might appropriately be named "The Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles."

This Book recounts the history of early Christianity from the ascension of Christ to the appearance of Paul in Rome. The Church made rapid progress in those days, and we should be inspired to greater efforts for the Lord by the holy zeal and energy of the early Christians. Chiefly through the missionary efforts of Peter and Paul, the Gospel was spread throughout Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece and Macedonia. The events recorded cover a period of about thirty-two years.

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## Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 13 First Quarter Lesson 1 January 2, 1949

OLIVE L. CLARK, Ph.D. (Tor.)

### THE PROMISE AND DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Lesson Text: Acts 1:4-9; 2:1-8.

Golden Text: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

#### Introduction:

See article entitled "Introduction to the Study of the Book of Acts."

#### I. The Promise Declared: Acts 1:4-9.

The Apostles were appointed to preach everywhere the message of salvation through Christ, and salvation was possible because Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification (Rom. 4:25). Since the truth of the resurrection of Christ is such an important factor in the doctrine of redemption, it is not surprising that it is emphasized at the very commencement of the Book of Acts. The Apostles were to bear witness to the fact of the resurrection (Lk. 24:48; John 15:27; Acts 2:32-36; 10:40, 41).

During the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension Christ taught His disciples truth concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit, promised by the Father (Lk. 24:49; John 7:39; 14:16; 16:7; 15:26). It was through the Holy Spirit that the apostles preached and laboured, hence the emphasis upon the promise of the Spirit.

The teaching of Christ regarding the Kingdom of God raised a question in the mind of the disciples as to the time when God would restore the Kingdom to Israel. The times and seasons for His plans and purposes are in the Father's own hands (Matt. 24:36). He is responsible for carrying out His sovereign will, and men are responsible for obeying that will. Hence the words, "But ye," which preface the commission.

It was God's will for His disciples that they should be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judaea, in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Nor were they sent to warfare at their own charges: power for their task would be supplied to them (2 Cor. 3:5), even the power of the

Holy Spirit. The same commission and the same power are ours to-day. Let us go forth and bear witness unto Him, and for Him!

The promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit was linked with the fact of our Lord's resurrection, and the promise of His Second Advent was linked with the fact of His ascension.

Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would descend "not many days hence", but He made no reference to the time of His Second Coming. He wished men to be watchful and to be busy at all times (Matt. 25:13; Lk. 19:13). We are to wait for the Son, and also to serve the Father (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). "The fact of His coming is certain, and that is sufficient for our comfort; the time of His coming is uncertain, and that is sufficient for our sanctification."

#### II. The Promise Fulfilled: Acts 2:1-8.

Our sovereign Lord, in controlling the events of the universe and in ordering the steps of each individual life, chooses His own time for action. Unlike men, He is never impatient, or indifferent (2 Pet. 3:18, 19); He never manifests Himself too early or too late, but exactly on time. The Day of Pentecost was "fully come" (Gal. 4:4).

The word "Pentecost" is derived from the Greek word meaning "fifty". Fifty days after the Feast of the First-fruits, characterized by the offering of a sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest (Lev. 23:9-14), the Jews celebrated the Feast of Pentecost, when the priest waved before the Lord loaves of bread baked in the oven (Lev. 23:15-22). Fifty days after the resurrection of Christ, the First-fruits (1 Cor. 15:23), the Holy Spirit descended from heaven, forming the individual Christians into one body, even as the particles of wheat had been combined into a loaf (1 Cor. 12:12, 13).

Unity of place and purpose in prayer (Acts 1:14) will always bring blessing to God's people.

The sounds and sights which accompanied the descent of the Holy Spirit are symbolic of great truths. The "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" suggests the mystery (John 3:8), the heavenly origin (John 14:26), and the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Kings 19:11). The Greek word meaning "wind" also means "spirit".

"All powerful as the wind He came,  
As viewless too."

Fire, in Scripture, denotes Deity (Exod. 3:2), purity (Isa. 6:6, 7), and judgment (Heb. 12:29). The tongues as of fire, parting and sitting upon each of them, speak of utterance, and of unity, yet diversity (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

The Holy Spirit was now not merely upon the Christians and with them, but He was also within them, as Christ had promised (John 14:17). The power of the Holy Spirit was supernaturally demonstrated to all in the gift of speaking in other tongues bestowed upon the disciples. It was the will of God that the message of salvation might be given as quickly as possible to as many as possible. The believers were at that time the only instruments of the Gospel, for the New Testament had not yet been written.

The gift of tongues was evidently a temporary gift; it is mentioned among the gifts in 1 Cor. 12:8-10, but not in the later list in Eph. 4:11. It was not regarded as the highest gift (1 Cor. 14:4, 12), and was not to be exercised in public without the gift of interpretation (1 Cor. 14:5, 28). Notice, too, that the disciples exalted the Lord, not themselves (John 16:13, 14), and the praise of the wonderful works of God differs greatly from the unintelligible mutterings of some who claim to be speaking in tongues to-day. The one who is filled with the Spirit will talk of Christ, not of any ecstatic emotional experience.

The exuberant joy of these disciples, the fact that they were controlled by a power outside themselves, and their gift of utterance were misinterpreted by the spectators, who thought that these were signs of drunkenness (v. 15; Eph. 5:18). Peter acted as spokesman for the disciples, clearly stating the explanation of the marvellous manifestation from God. His sermon has two main divisions: (1) The Holy Spirit was sent according to the word of God (vv. 14-21); (2) The Holy Spirit was sent because Jesus Christ is Lord (vv. 22-36).

#### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Dec. 27—The Promise of the Spirit ..... Lk. 24:36-49.  
Dec. 28—The Comfort of the Spirit ..... John 14:15-21.  
Dec. 29—The Mission of the Spirit ..... John 15:21-27.  
Dec. 30—The Conviction of the Spirit ..... John 16:1-14.  
Dec. 31—The Fulness of the Spirit ..... John 7:38-39.  
Jan. 1—The Prophecy concerning the Spirit ..... Joel 2:27-32.  
Jan. 2—"This is that" ..... Acts 2:14-21