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THE CHILD OF THE MAID

By JOHN OXENHAM

On Christmas Day the Child was born,
On Christmas Day in the morning;—

—To tread the long way, lone and lorn,
—To wear the bitter crown of thorn,
—To break the heart by man's sin torn,
—To die at last the Death of Scorn.

For this The Child of the Maid was born,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

But that first day when He was born,
Among the cattle and the corn,
The sweet Maid-Mother wondering,
And sweetly, deeply, pondering
The words that in her heart did ring,
Unto her new-born king did sing,—

"My baby, my baby,
My own little son,
Whence come you,
Where go you,
My own little one?
Whence come you?
And now, unto me all alone
That wonder of wonders is properly known.
Where go you?
Ah, that now, 'tis only He knows,
Who sweetly on us, dear, such favour bestows.
In us, dear, this day is some great work begun,—
Ah me, little son dear, I would it were done!
I wonder . . . I wonder . . .
And—wish—it—were—done!

"O little, little feet, dears,
So curly, curly sweet!—
How will it be with you, dears,
When all your work's complete?
O little, little hands, dears,
That creep about my breast!—
What great things you will do dears,
Before you lie at rest!
O softest little head, dear,
It shall have crown of gold,
For it shall have great honour
Before the world grows old!
O sweet, white, soft round body,
It shall sit upon a throne!
My little one, my little one,
Thou art the Highest's son!
All this the angel told me,
And so I'm sure it's true,
For he told me who was coming,—
And that sweet thing is YOU."

On Christmas Day The Child was born,
On Christmas Day in the morning;—

—He trod the long way, lone and lorn,
—He wore the bitter crown of thorn,
—His hands and feet and heart were torn,
—He died at last the Death of Scorn.

But through His coming Death was slain,
That you and I might live again.
For this The Child of The Maid was born,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

THE MORNING STAR . . .

When the evils of earth were greatest
The Christ-child came from afar;
When the night of the world was darkest
Shone forth the Bethlehem Star;
Glory and peace was its message,
Love and goodwill to men—
A peace beyond their making,
A love beyond their ken.

Long has the vexed world waited
The peace that He came to bring;
Long have the turbulent peoples
Looked for a righteous king;
Long has His sad creation
Waited redemption's word,
Long have His faithful servants
Watched for their absent Lord.

Long — but the time draws nearer,
The Bridegroom comes from afar;
When the night of the age is darkest
We shall see the Morning Star.
Evil is growing stronger,
And hearts are sick with fear;
But our hope is growing brighter,
For we know that the hour is near.

Faint in the dark skies gleaming,
Faint on the roaring seas,
But it heralds the dawn of glory
And it hastens the day of peace —
The glory, the peace He is bringing,
The King who comes from afar;
And to Him who overcometh
He will give the Morning Star.

—ANNIE JOHNSON FLINT

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Daily Bible Readings

Dec. 23—Blessing in Serving the Lord . . . Dan. 3; Rev. 22:1-5
Dec. 24—Blessing in Tithing . . . Prov. 3:9, 10; Luke 6:38
Dec. 25—Blessing in Christian Fellowship . . . 1 John 1
Dec. 26—Blessing in Deliverance . . . Psalms 34
Dec. 27—Blessing in Separation . . . 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1
Dec. 28—Blessing in Thinking on Christ . . . Psalms 104
Dec. 29—Blessing in Belonging to the Lord . . . Isa. 43:1-21

Season's Greetings from the Staff

THE key note of the gospel is joy. Never was there a more blessed declaration of this fact than when the angel announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem the nativity of Christ. "Behold," he said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." To further show the interest and exultation of heaven in this stupendous event, the angel who heralded the tidings was suddenly joined by a multitude of the heavenly host who broke forth as a mighty choir praising God, and saying "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." They had seen, at the beginning of creation the kindling of the stars, the raising of the world of stone and water into a beautiful earth filled with life, and the making of man, all of which filled them with wonder. What they saw this time eclipsed all. The mighty God is here clothed in the flesh of a little babe, wrapped in a poor woman's swaddling clothes and lying in a manger of hay. This, the angel's cry, is beyond all glory, yea, the most glorious of all. The favoured shepherds to whom the tidings of heavenly gladness were first announced returned from the sight, glorifying and praising God for all

the things they had seen and heard. Well did the prophet Isaiah, with his full knowledge of the Redeemer's work to put an end to sin and bring in everlasting righteousness, call on the whole creation to shout for joy.

To the Christian Christmas time is an occasion of utmost joy. In meditation, we look again upon the babe of Bethlehem for the confirmation of our faith and remember it is written: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Also . . . "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Joy to the world: the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

THE GOSPEL WITNESS staff wishes all readers of THE GOSPEL WITNESS a joyous Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

—DR. H. C. SLADE,
Chairman, Board of Directors.

The Jarvis Street Pulpit

"Our Lord's Unique Title"

A Sermon by the Pastor, Dr. H. C. Slade

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, December 16th, 1956

(Electrically Recorded)

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor. The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

IT MIGHT be profitable for us, as we approach the Christmas season, to consider briefly the context of this text. Around 500 years before the Lord Jesus Christ was born, it was a time of trouble. Judah, as a country, was shadowed with great anxiety. An awful figure, like a cloud, loomed up on the horizon, and to them it was filled with the potentialities of storm, trouble, lightning, and destruction. It was nothing less than the figure of the Assyrian army, standing before them thirsty for the blood of the people of God, ready to devour with all its fierceness and might. The Hebrew people feared for the welfare of their country and cried out for a deliverer. They had convictions with respect to the future. They believed that they were the chosen of God, and as Hosea so clearly set before them — he loved them and therefore he drew them and made them to be a great people and a great nation — they knew there was a future, and they had an eye to it. Abraham had that vision and held firmly the same belief. They believed that their destiny was wrapped up with the purposes of Almighty God.

Isaiah steps into the scene and he comes forth with bright prophecies — promises of better, yea, great days. He refers to the promise of a deliverer who was to come. He promises to them great victory. My friends, Christianity not only predicts but, if I may use a stronger term, assures us of a bright and glorious future. All other religions which we refer to as non-Christian religions hold out no brightness, no promise before their adherents at all, and I can well understand how so many of them come to utmost despair. Not so with the Christian faith. And so Isaiah lifts their minds up to God, fills them with hope and tells them of the deliverer to come. And he refers to the qualities of this deliverer, setting them out in a series of titles, as I have read tonight. He gives us none other than a prophetic view of the promised Messiah. This promised Messiah, as he said, is to be both human and divine. He is to be the God-man. Therefore, he speaks saying, "Unto us a child is born — humanity; but also unto us a Son is given" — divinity, deity — setting forth the great truth, as we considered it last Lord's Day evening, that this One will come, born of a virgin. But also He is One given. He is to be a ruler, as set forth here. He shall reign forever, and of His government there shall be no end. His government will be an indestructible government: There is nothing internally in His kingdom to bring about corruption. It is incorruptible, undefiled, and that which fadeth not away. There is

nothing externally that can destroy it — "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Therefore, "of this government," he says, "there shall be no end. He shall reign for ever and for ever."

I don't need to say to you as an audience tonight that the fulfilment of all this is found in none other than the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of the old commentators have thought the reference was made to Hezekiah who was yet to come. Now, Hezekiah was a great king; He was one of those who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Under him there was effected a great turning back to the living God, a throwing away of their idols. All that is true. But Hezekiah in turn, like all before him, had to go the way of all flesh. He, likewise, was gathered unto his fathers. My friends, after he came and departed, there was no cancellation of this prophecy, for it pointed forth beyond the days of Hezekiah to One who was to come. He refers to Him here under these titles: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."

I.

I want us tonight to confine our thoughts particularly to the one title; the one that to my mind is unique, "His name shall be called WONDERFUL." We shall make but brief reference to others. Of course, one or all of the titles given cannot adequately describe this person, Jesus Christ; yea, they all fall short. We are told that there are no less than 265 titles used to set forth this person, the Son of God. You say, "Why so many?" Because, dear friends, not one or all of them together can really proclaim this One. We sometimes sing, "Join all the glorious names, of wisdom, love and power, that mortals ever knew that angels ever bore. All are too mean to speak His worth, too mean to set my Saviour forth." But human titles are given. Language is supplied, that we may have some idea, some conception of this great person. Paul broke forth into praise and said, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." "Unspeakable gift"! What does it mean? It simply means the inexpressible gift; or another definition, that which is not fully expounded. That is our Saviour. You say, "Well, much has been written concerning Him. Surely many of His glories, millions of His glories have been set forth through the centuries. How many sermons have been preached about Him!" To this hour the truth concerning Him and His greatness never has been exhausted and has never yet been fully expounded. "Now we know in part; but then we shall know even as also we are known." The Queen of

Sheba came all the way from her country to hear the wisdom of Solomon and to behold something of his glory. She had heard a great deal, but when Solomon led her from one chamber of the temple and the palace to another, and she heard much of what he had to say, she had no spirit within her. She exclaimed, "The half was not told me."

My friends, you can study this Person, the wonders of our great Saviour, through life. Oh, God help us so to do! To go to His college, to sit at His feet, as did Mary, and learn of Him, attain unto all the knowledge we can. Then we will find that we have only scratched the surface, we have only had a little glimpse. But some day we shall see Him as He is. We are told we shall be like Him. Wonder of all wonders that that should be so! But the title here gives to us (His name, "shall be called Wonderful". My friends, the titles which refer to Christ have meaning. What does this one mean? His name shall be called Wonderful because He is wonderful. There are thousands of things in this life called wonderful, but there is nothing wonderful about them; they are quite ordinary.

My wife and I were once travelling in a car. The lady who was driving us about, I was wishing would change her term a little bit, for at almost every turn of the road as we would view some scenery, she would say, and I can hear her yet, "extra-ordinary." We would take another turn, "extra-ordinary." "My, this is extra-ordinary." I felt that most of what we saw was quite ordinary. I had seen trees before, and I had seen roads and turns, and houses, and cottages, and all the rest. Really, I didn't think there was anything so extraordinary about them. Oh, we use that term "wonderful" of things not wonderful. But, when it applies to this Person, it is true. He is wonderful.

Manoah and his wife, father and mother of the great Samson, had a visitation from God. An angel came and spent some little time giving them a prophecy concerning Samson, and so on. Manoah dared to ask, "What is your name?" The reply was, "Why dost thou ask me my name when it is Wonderful?" or "Secret" is the word in our authorized version; but it actually means "wonderful". He had a visitation, my friends, from none other than the Son of God Himself. "My name," He says, "is Wonderful."

Isaiah here, under the inspiration of God, says, "His name shall be called Wonderful." What does it mean? Possibly there are several translations that could be given to it. Sometimes that word in the Bible is translated "marvellous" referring to none other than Christ. In the 118th Psalm, the 22nd and 23rd verses, the prophecy is of this "Stone" which is to come, which is to be rejected of man, but has become the head of the corner. Peter on the Day of Pentecost takes up that very truth. "This is the stone," he says, "which was rejected of you elders and has become the head of the corner." The Psalmist said, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. It is wonderful in our eyes." My friends, He is indeed the marvellous One. You might translate it "miraculous". Jesus Christ is God's greatest miracle. It means that as a Person in His being, and works, He is exalted above the ordinary. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Great is the mystery, the miracle, concerning this Person.

Sometimes that word, we find, is translated "the separated One", which simply means that He is the distinguished One, the noble One, the One set apart, higher than all. You know it was said of Saul, the first king of Israel, that he was head and shoulders above all the other

people in the nation, and as he walked and moved in about them, he was distinguished, set apart, separated in this regard. My friends, this One is the most distinguished One. He is above all; He is the highest One exalted to the highest throne, the separated One, the One apart from all. In other words, there is none like Him. But, the word is well used, "Wonderful". His name shall be called Marvellous, Miraculous, separated, unique, standing alone. Oh, as we like to add, He is the chiefest among ten thousand to our souls. "Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips." I like the way the text reads, "his name shall be called Wonderful." In other words, He was wonderful, He is wonderful. But here is the point, He shall ever be called Wonderful. There is reference sometimes to what we call a "nine-days' wonder". It is a proverb. That is about as long as some of these wonders live — nine days — and they are gone. But this Wonder, this wonderful Person, shall be forever, and His wonder shall be forever, and He shall be called, throughout all eternity, "Wonderful". Thank God, we shall have the privilege of acclaiming Him as such. There is no time when this One shall not be called "Wonderful". He was wonderful during His thirty years here. Wonderful indeed, as I want us to see briefly. But His wonder doesn't end there. It goes on forever. "He shall be called Wonderful."

These titles are most gripping to me. I think we should pause for a moment to notice how these other titles, given to us here, do also have a part and disclose to us something of the wonderfulness of this Person. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor." I don't believe that is an adjective — wonderful Counsellor — and yet He is a wonderful Counsellor. But that name is a noun. His name shall be called Wonderful, but He is also Counsellor, which simply means He is the all-wise One. He is qualified to guide and direct in wisdom the whole human race. He is qualified to direct kings, statesmen, emperors. Oh, that they would bow before Him! Our poor United Nations can meet day in and day out, week in and week out, and never offer a prayer to this One, the only One who can give them common sense, which I think they need. He alone can give them guidance. He is the only all-wise One. He never gives wrong advice; he never errs at any point. He has given to us counsel here, words of wisdom in His own Word. Every word that we read we find to be a word of wisdom, not only in the Proverbs, but throughout this Book from Genesis to Revelation.

Somebody told me a while ago they had taken the advice of a lawyer. I hope this isn't always so, but he said, "He really got me into a mess, and I found myself wrongly advised and it cost me considerable money." Oh, lawyers are not all-wise by any means; they make mistakes as we all make mistakes. But this One is the all-wise God: "His name shall be called Counsellor." Oh, how happy are those people who in all their ways acknowledge Him, and have Him to direct their paths!

III.

Notice here He is set forth in His wonderfulness under the next title, "THE MIGHTY GOD." Here we have His deity set forth and, of course, it is implied that He is God; He is mighty. Literally, it means His name shall be called "the strong One," suggesting to us the One with infinite resources who never did undertake anything and failed, nor found Himself incapacitated to carry the project through. Oh, you can refer that truth, my friends, and make the application to the salvation of a human soul. He

undertakes to save you and to save me. I quoted this morning, and I will quote it again, "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." The good work which He begins He is able to perform until His great day of appearing. He is the mighty God, the infinitely strong One — able to keep. He is able to do anything — to make worlds, to uphold all things by the word of His power, which He does. In other words, He is the Almighty. That seems to be very difficult. That is the big argument in theological circles today — "Was Jesus a man, a mere man, a good man? Or, could He be God manifest in the flesh?" And so they argue and discuss. "This One is to come," said Isaiah. So when He came He declared Himself to be none other than God the Son, The mighty God, THE EVERLASTING FATHER.

I had some trouble with that phrase for some years: "How could He be the Father?" until I came to see that it has no reference whatsoever to His relationship in the Trinity. God the Father, He is God the Son, and there is God the Holy Ghost. What does it mean? It simply means that He is the Father of eternity. A phrase used, very often, applied to a teacher, father of such and such a thought, father of such a School, father of such an idea, that is the term — The everlasting Father. Literally it means He is the Father of the future world. This future world is devised or planned out by Him, carved out, made, created. "In my father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you." My friends, He is the Father of the many mansions. He is the Father of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. He is the One who has eternity in His grasp; He is the One who gives to us eternal life; He is the source of life, the Father of eternity. My friends, what a Person He is!

And it is added here, "THE PRINCE OF PEACE." He consults our peace in everything He does. In consideration of the redemption of our souls, which was the great concern of His heart, He had in mind your peace and my peace. "There is no peace," saith my God, "to the wicked." There is no peace in the world, there is no rest. Like the dove of Noah's ark that could find no rest for his feet, we can find no rest for our souls in this world. There is no peace. But He is our peace, and He came to make peace by the blood of His cross: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you know anything about this peace? "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled." He gives us a peace which the world cannot give, neither can the world take it away. Christian friends, "Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall garrison your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Ah, He came to give us peace! I cannot but form the contrast with many rulers, many leaders, many emperors, who have come — what to do? — to make war. They delight to shed blood, they delight to cause division, but He has come to bring peace. It was said at His birth, the angels joined in chorus, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Oh, He knew that nothing was needed more in this world than peace. Thank God, for those who know the peace that the Saviour gives, the Prince of Peace. He comes to bring peace to His Church. And as Father of eternity, my friends, over there it will be all peace. "He causeth wars to cease unto

the ends of the earth" for He is The Prince of Peace. I am sure you will stop and say, "Oh, in His titles, all of which described Him as He is, He is really all these things. I cannot but acquiesce in my soul. His name is Wonderful"; not only called in Scripture "Wonderful", but also by us. We delight to call Him Wonderful.

III.

This is a large subject, but I just want you to follow me for a few more moments, as we briefly go into His history. Historically He is wonderful. Yes, the fact that He eternally existed, the everlasting God, from everlasting to everlasting, is wonderful. There is none like Him. He is Wonderful in His birth. I am not going to spend much time with that, to make extended reference to it, but there never was a birth like His birth. He was made a human being; He had a mother, but not a human father; He was born of the virgin. Therefore, as we quoted, He became God in human form. No birth was ever like His birth. As soon as He was born the tyrant Herod sought His life. He was also Wonderful in His life while here. Think of His humility. Was there ever any one like Him? "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" — I think I shall quote it — "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery (or a thing to be grasped at) to be equal with God." But He was equal. But listen — "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He said, "Come and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Christ was Wonderful in His teaching. Read the Sermon on the Mount. You don't need a dictionary beside you to do it. Listen to some preachers and you need a half dozen dictionaries, and even then you wouldn't know what they are talking about. I don't think they know themselves, some of them. Simple, clear, explicit! He spake as One who had authority, and not as the scribes: "Never man spake like this man." Oh, wonderful in His teaching. He taught things no one else could ever teach. In His teaching He unfolded by parables the things of the Kingdom, the things yet to come to pass. Who else could so teach? Oh, wonderful in His teaching! My friends, wonderful in the wide reach of His teaching! Someone remarked, "He didn't establish any college. He didn't leave a college behind." He committed to the care of some fishermen His truth, the great body of His doctrine. This teaching through them and others has gone through the centuries, yea, gone throughout the earth. Everybody hasn't accepted the teaching; but it has gone forth. No teaching like this teaching! Wonderful in His teaching.

Oh, wonderful in His work — the work of atonement that He effected, the work of saving people from their sin, from the power of sin. What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus our Lord! Wonderful in His death. There never was a death like His death. Even the mock trial stands out. The false witnesses called in — they couldn't find any fault with Him, because His character was a perfect character. None could convince Him of sin. Wonderful in His character.

But then in His death — wonderful death. Wonder of all wonders that God should come in human form and be placed on a tree and die, and shed His blood, and that He could turn to Pilate and tell Him "You have no power at all against me, unless it were received from above." And again, "I could call twelve legions of angels and be de-

livered." But He goes to the cross and there He gives up the Ghost. Wonderful things happened in connection with His death; the rocks were rent; and a resurrection took place. Many came out of their graves and appeared in the city. The veil of the temple, behind which no one could look or enter, only the high priest once a year, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the fallen of Adam's race permitted to come directly into God's presence through Him. Oh, in His death wonderful:

Wonderful in His resurrection; everything was quietly done. The stone was placed at the sepulchre door. An angel came down and rolled the stone away. The clothes were placed to one side in order. And quietly the door was opened and out came the Son of God. He became the first fruits of them that slept. He is wonderful in His ascension. Oh, if we only had time — we can only sketch these things — we could see how wonderful He is in His Second Coming; when He shall come with trumpet sound. The Son of Man shall come in His glory, sitting on the throne of His glory, with all His holy angels, gathering the elect from the four corners of the earth and calling unbelieving humanity before the eternal tribunal. "His name shall be called Wonderful."

I want to point out to you that this Person is universally wonderful. He is not confined to the Jewish people, not confined to the educated or to the illiterate, to the rich or to the poor, but He belongs to all. Wonderful, dear friends, to anybody who will receive Him as Saviour and Lord. The greatest intellects the world has ever known, we could name a list of some, like Gladstone and others, have been pleased to bow before Him and speak of Him as the Wonderful One. Incomparably wonderful! Science has discovered wonderful things; Yes, we are thankful for the advances made. But, my friends, think of all the wonders you like and bring them before Him, and you will have to say, "This One is the wonder of all wonders, He eclipses all. All sink into oblivion in comparison to this wonderful Person."

With this I close: Dear friend, is He wonderful to you? "Unto you a child is born, unto you a son is given." Is He wonderful to you tonight? Is He your Saviour? Is He your Redeemer? The wise receive this wonderful Person. Oh, what folly to reject Him! Because, apart from Him, we have no Saviour, and apart from Him there is no acceptance before God, there is no life, real life in this world or in the one to come. "Look unto me," He says, "and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else."

Next Sunday we speak of as Christmas Sunday. We shall come to see the story of His birth morning and night. There will be also Christmas music. Let us come and praise the name of this One who is called, and shall forever be called, Wonderful.

N A T O

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth:

—1 Timothy 2:1-4.

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Prayer Before the Sermon

We draw near to Thee O Lord this morning, desiring to be numbered among Thy spiritual worshippers, who by Thy grace worship Thee in spirit and truth. We confess our inability to render to Thee any service which Thou canst accept apart from Thine abounding grace. And as we bow in Thy holy presence, we make mention of the blood of Christ, for we have no hope toward Thee save through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We come this morning to present to Thee the adoration of our hearts, to worship Thee, to give unto Thee the glory that is due unto Thy name. We pray that the blood may purge away the iniquity of our holy things, that our prayers and our praises may be acceptable in Thy holy sight. We pray that Thou wilt make us all to recognize this morning how great Thou art, how condescending, and how kind, in sending to us Thine only begotten Son. We thank Thee for the significance of this. We bless Thee that we have not to grope in the darkness, to wonder whether there be a God or not, or to ask ourselves questions as to what He is like. We thank Thee that Thou hast stooped to the measure of our understanding. Thou hast condescended to the lowliness, the limitations, of our finite minds; and Thou art pleased to look upon the world in the face of a little Child.

We bless Thee that we have now a High Priest Who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but Who was yet without sin, Who, having been tempted Himself, knows how to succour them that are tempted. We rejoice that we have One Who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, the Son of God, the Son of Man, upon the throne interceding in our behalf. We bless Thee for the Daysman that is betwixt us, Who is at once Man and God, God and Man, Who lays His hand upon us both, and thus brings us back by the cleansing of His precious blood to fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

We pray Thy blessing upon this congregation, and upon all the families represented here. Be graciously pleased to visit every home. We commend to Thee the fathers and mothers, with their cares and responsibilities. We pray that every one of them may know Christ, and that those who know Thee may have a daily experience of Thine upholding care, and the power of Thine indwelling Spirit.

Bless the young people who are here, that such as are Thine may be made steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Save them, we pray Thee, from the world's allurements. Help them that their affections may be wholly centred in Christ; and that for His sake they may live wholly unto Him. Bless any of them who are not Christians. May their hearts be opened to the reception of the Lord Jesus this morning.

We pray for the children, that early in life they may learn to love the children's Saviour. Oh, may many of them come to Thee this morning. May this morning hour be one of great grace to us all. May many a heart be opened to the reception of Christ, and to the power of Thy regenerating Spirit.

Bless us now since we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

IT IS not surprising, I suppose, that at this season of the year perhaps more than any other time in the year people are accustomed to think of each other, and to remember each other with some gifts. The intrinsic value of the gift may be very small; it may express the utmost of the giver's ability. But nobody estimates the value, in money, of Christmas gifts. They are but an expression, as a rule, of somebody's love. It is a very beautiful practice: I wish

it might be confined to those who do really desire to express their love for somebody else.

I have found it very pleasant, sometimes, when travelling to give a tip to somebody for service rendered. I do not care very much about giving it just because it is a custom, or because I might be thought to be a little bit small if I did not. But when somebody really renders a service it is a joy to be able, in some way, to express one's appreciation. And I am afraid that the Christmas gift habit has become somewhat conventional. And sometimes there is a danger of its being overdrawn; and people may conform to the practice without any heart in it. Well, be independent in that matter as in other things, and where your heart goes, then let your gift, or card, or whatever it may be, go.

I say, it is not surprising, because we on this occasion remember the greatest of all gifts. In these two chapters, the eighth and ninth of Second Corinthians, the inspired apostle sets forth for the profit of believers the privilege of having fellowship with God in this ministry of giving. And he reminds us of the grace of the Lord Jesus, Who "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." And he concludes his argument with the verse I have announced as a text. When he has set before us our privilege to enter into fellowship with Him, he gathers it all up with this, which is really an exclamation of gratitude, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

A gift that is unspeakable is indescribable. You cannot estimate its value; you cannot define its qualities; you cannot compare it with any other gift: it is in a class by itself—it comes from God; it is bestowed by Him for the accomplishment of that which nothing else could accomplish. And I am not going to try to fathom the depths of this text, nor to scale the heights, nor, by any means, to estimate its dimensions. I want to make it very simple, and tell you of this great gift, and of what it accomplishes, of what God did when He bestowed upon the world this unspeakable gift.

I.

First of all: it is a gift that cancels all our debts. What a blessing that is, to be out of debt! I have talked with people who have been overtaken by misfortune, who have had sickness in their families, who have been unable, by their utmost endeavours, to make ends meet; and they have gotten behind, gotten into debt. I remember a man's saying to me, "If only I could get money enough to pay my debts so that I should owe no man anything, I think I should be the happiest man in the world, if I had not a cent left; if I could only be free from all obligations to men, if my debts were paid." It is a sad condition for anyone to be in. But it is a state into which some of the best people are sometimes thrust through no fault of their own.

But, my dear friends, what a sad thing it is, to be in debt to God, to owe so much that if we had a thousand worlds of our own, we could not pay a cent on the dollar, to be

overwhelmed with obligations, to be utterly bankrupt before God with no possibility either in time or eternity of ever getting out of debt! And that is the situation with every one of us. Do you know that is what is troubling the world to-day? Every nation is staggering under a load of debt. There is not anything this old world needs so much as somebody to cancel its debts.

A leading Toronto financier said, "There can be no return to prosperity until those debts are somehow or another adjusted." It is too big for me to understand. When people talk of millions, of billions, and hundreds of them, they get into a realm that I cannot explore. It needs an Einstein, or somebody, to understand what it is all about. But everyone can understand when hard times come.

Oh what a blessing, that there was a day when God, in infinite mercy, said, "I will cancel a rebellious world's debts; I will give My Son; I will pay it all myself."

I have heard men laugh at what they call the mechanical view of the atonement, the idea of weighing obligations in scales, the idea that God had to balance His books. Surely this weary world knows to-day that in material affairs at least that mechanical view of things is all important; and it is equally important in the moral realm.

Oh, I have pointed out to you that it is the privilege of every one to stand before God with all debts cancelled, the last farthing of indebtedness paid, and to be perfectly free.

"Jesus paid it all,

All to Him I owe;

Sin had left a crimson stain,

He washed it white as snow."

I beg of you, do not go out of this building without knowing that all your debts are paid. Go out a free man, or a free boy, or girl, whatever you are, and say, "Thank God, that is settled: I can stand before the judgment seat unafraid."

II.

That, I say, would be a great blessing, but what should we do to-morrow? What if a man's debts were all paid, does he need anything more than that? Oh, yes: he needs something for the future.

How would you like to have somebody make a deposit in the biggest store in the world, where they keep all kinds of clothing, the very best — light, airy garments for the summer time, rich warm furs for the winter, everything you need? Supposing you were to receive word sometime, saying, "There is a deposit in that store, made to your account, and you can go and get just as many clothes as you want? Do not live a beggar any more; do not go around shabbily attired any more: wear the best you have on all occasions. You cannot exhaust that store, and it is all paid for. A friend of yours has made a deposit; he wants to see you well dressed; he does not want to be ashamed of you on any occasion." Would you not like that? Would that not be a fine thing? And then to be sure that every garment would fit; and no matter what the occasion, to be sure you had just the exact kind of clothes to wear!

What trouble these women are in sometimes, when they get an invitation to a wedding, or something of that sort! The dear man comes home, and finds his wife all troubled about something. He says, "What is the matter?" "Well, there is that wedding coming, and I have not anything that is fit to wear." Of course she wants to appear at her best; and no matter what she has — this is a special occasion, and she wants to be ready for that emergency. But I say, Would it not be a comfort to have all you need, so that no

matter how varied the occasions of life, there is always something in the wardrobe that will just fit, and you can go out looking your best?

Now, I have not understood the gospel if that is not exactly what God has done by His unspeakable gift. What need we to stand before His judgment seat? The robe of righteousness — and it is ours. We are to be adorned as a bride for her husband — and some of us need a lot of adorning! Do not complain if some people put on fine clothes: they need them. We all need something to make us a little bit more presentable; and we ought to make the best of ourselves. It is no sin to do it. Morally and spiritually we have the very best at our command. There is no reason why we should behave as people who are not Christians, when we go to work. You may have to put off your Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes when you go to the shop; but your soul should be arrayed in such garments as would fit in the palace of the King, — plenty of clothes, paid for by His unspeakable gift!

Another thing, to make it very plain: How would you like to be told that in the most elaborate restaurant in town — I do not know what it is, I do not know much about the restaurants in town, but the best one whatever it is — supposing you should get word to say your board is paid as long as you live, if you lived to be as old as Methuselah, *table d'hote* you know, everything paid in advance? Now just delight yourself in all the delicacies that are prepared; do not live on soda biscuits and cheese, or anything like that. Just go and get a good dinner as often as you feel you want one. Live like princes, it is paid for. Would not that be a gift? I have had a man come to me and behave as though he were really an aristocrat. He would say, "My board is paid a week in advance." A week in advance! Quite so. Well I will tell you something: mine is paid for for all eternity, in advance. Here, and hereafter, there can be no want to those who fear Him. He brings us into His banqueting house, and His banner over us is love. He will see to it that you get a good dinner to-day. Go to the pantry, or go somewhere, and get it, for it is all provided for. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

One of the big problems in our day is that a lot of people cannot pay their rent. That is a sad thing. Scores of times I have had people come to me saying, "Now I have got to get out to-night. My landlady has just given me notice that unless I pay my rent to-night, I go out on the street. What shall I do?" That is a difficult situation. Would you not like to have a house all paid for, that will never wear out, that will never need any repairs, upon which you will never have to pay any taxes; all furnished like a palace, and having a clear title to it, a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? Would you like to have a house like that? Sometimes I have heard of a man, who had money enough, making his daughter, on the occasion of her marriage, a present of a house. O, what father would not like to do that; just to say to her, "Now, my dear, here is the deed of a house. It is all paid for; just go in and be comfortable, and happy. Do not worry. It is all paid for; it is yours." Would you not like to have that? That is just exactly what the Lord did when He gave Jesus Christ: He bestowed upon this homeless world a title to mansions in the skies.

And there is another thing that has been provided for. Do you like good music? I am surprised to find how many people manage to get radios. They just want to hear music from somewhere. I saw in the paper an announcement of

Handel's *Messiah*, and I said to myself, "I wish I could go and hear it. I would like to hear that seven times a week if I had the time." It never wears out. I like good music, do you not? It costs a lot of money sometimes, when we cannot afford it. Some of you have heard Paderewski play, and you have said, "Oh, I wish I could hear a man play like that every day!" Ah, but I will tell you what: I am going to live in a house some day where everyone who lives there is an artist, everyone is a trained musician, everyone has a good voice — no magpies up there — everyone will have a good voice, everyone will be able to sing, everyone will be thoroughly trained and disciplined, and there will not be a discordant note when that great Hallelujah Chorus is sung.

Now let me tell you: I have got a ticket for a concert, and it is all paid for, and it is a reserved seat, and I am not going to give it to you: you will have to get one for yourself. I am going to be there, and I need it for myself. But you can have one too. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." He will pay our way into the glory, and into all the music of the heavenly choirs. Do you not want to go? Do you not want to hear it?

I went into a man's home one evening some years ago. He was sitting in his dining room, and his dining room table was covered over with booklets. And what do you suppose they were? They were advertisements of travel, shipping guides, and time-tables of every railroad on the continent. And there he was poring over those time-tables. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I am making out a trip." "Making out a trip?" "Yes; I am going somewhere, and I am just trying to make up my mind where I shall go. I am going away for a holiday, and I am just studying the map, and these time-tables, and shipping lists. I have not decided what ship I shall sail on." And he said, "This is the most interesting season of the year, and I want to go somewhere." Did you ever feel that you wanted to be always going? Do you ever feel as though you would like to explore all the countries of the earth? Would it not be lovely to have no obligations, and just get on a ship, and sail away to see one country, and then go and see another, and to explore all the little-travelled paths of earth, and come home at last saying, "Well, I have a fairly good idea of the wonders of this old world"? I am afraid it would be a temptation to some people if they had money enough to do it. I confess that I should like it. Sometimes I look forward to a holiday, a long one, when I could just start from somewhere, and just go on — and on — and on, and not care when I stopped. I am going to have it, too, because my fare is already paid. I have got a ticket for the long, long journey — oh, not to explore this old earth. I can imagine some man, who has lived in a little backwood village somewhere, where there are just little frame houses, and an old rickety pump out in the yard, and no water in the house, no furnace, no comforts at all, and poor old sidewalks — if any — and the fences all torn down — just a shabby place. Did you ever see a village down at the heel? I have. Just a little village that looked as though nobody lived there at all, like some country cemeteries; just utterly neglected. And there is a man who is quite interested in this little village. But some day he leaves it. He gets on the train and goes out to another world. He takes a ship across the sea, and travels the world around. Then he comes back to this little place, with broken fences, and all the rest of it. And he says, "My, my, did I ever live there? How was I ever interested in a 'delapidated place like this?' And I think the time will come when the finest city that earth

can present will seem so shabby that we shall wonder that we ever managed to maintain an interest in the things of this earth at all, when we shall have gone from world to world and explored the universe as I am sure we shall all do some day, as God's revealed children. What a blessing that will be! And it is all prepared for us. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." You had better get your trunk packed; you had better get ready for that journey, so that the time of departure will not find you unprepared.

Now I wonder if any of you were ever lazy. I should not expect you to acknowledge it. You are never lazy; you are tired sometimes. Some people are tired all the time; they never get over being tired. Some people are always developing a pain when they want a little rest. I remember going to a place once, and heard some people singing about the land of rest. I stopped them in the middle of the hymn — I knew them pretty well — and I said, "Please tell me why you should sigh for the land of rest? We will change the hymn to, 'To the work, to the work.'" There are people who want a lot of rest; and all of us want a rest sometimes.

A few years ago I remember being at the 'Exhibition' — that was not the last time I was there — and we sat down at a table at which a great many had been sitting before apparently, for the table linen needed laundering very badly. And just opposite me there was a table with father and mother and three or four children. And they had the same thing that we had. Mrs. Shields and I were sitting there. And we were just near enough to these people to hear this good housewife say, when the food was put on the table, "Is this not a treat?" I thought, "What in the world does that mean, to be calling this a treat?" I thought it was an opportunity to "let patience have her perfect work" and to endure something. But this woman said, "Is this not a treat?" I knew what she meant. She had five or six other mouths to feed. She had to look after her children, and that big man of her's, and that kept her busy no doubt. And perhaps she had just a bite occasionally in the kitchen, or when they were all finishing their dinner she was just about to begin. You women smile: you know what I am talking about. Now what that woman meant was that it was a treat to have someone wait on her. It was a rest to her to have someone else to take care of her for one half-hour in her life. I do not blame her. I do not suppose she cared much about the food; it was just a rest to be cared for.

Would you not like to have servants? Oh, have you not dreamed of that, just sitting down, and being waited upon? Would you not like that? I would. We children used to tell my mother that she was born to be a duchess, if not an empress. But we all have to have someone to wait on us, to look after us. Oh, but who could look after you? I know of some who could look after you. Shall I tell you — and it is all paid for too. Servants to wait on us!

When the Queen of Sheba came to see the glory of Solomon, when she saw the meat on his table, and his servants, there was no breath left in her, so splendidly trained, so finely appraised, so serviceable, doing their lord's bidding, guided by his eye! I do not wonder she was breathless.

And do you know it is said of the angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Angels are, literally, even now are ministering. And when we get to heaven we shall have servants to anticipate our every need. And their wages are paid for all eternity. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

I could go on and on, and tell you of a thousand things that are already paid for by the unspeakable gift of God.

III.

Supposing someone were to send you a Christmas gift, supposing it were a good one, an expensive one, or supposing it were only a poor one, and you were to open it, and wrap it up and send it back, and say, "No, thank you, I do not want it?" Could you more grievously offend anyone than by doing that? I hope our dear brother did not misunderstand me. I am glad he came up to me because it serves me with an illustration. He came up and wanted to give me a bill, and I wanted to put it on the collection plate, and he said, "No; it is for you. I want you to have it for a Christmas box." I want him to come up and give me that Christmas box at the close of this service, and I am going to have the pleasure of giving it to the radio fund, because if he gives it to me I can do what I like with it: it is mine. But I would not be so ungrateful as to refuse his gift when he wanted to bestow it upon me. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." And someone says, "Thank you, I do not want it." What! you have not given your heart to Jesus? You have spurned God's Best? Is that true? "Why," you say, "that would be a most ungracious thing to do, would it not?" What is the best way to treat a gift like this? Just to receive it. The best way of saying, "Thank you" to God is to open your heart and life to all that Jesus Christ wants to be to you, and do for you, and receive Him in His fulness, and enter into an experience of His abounding grace. Then you will be able to say for ever and for ever, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

All of you boys and girls will receive presents next Thursday morning, — and a week from Thursday morning there won't be anything left of them, most of them will be broken. And some of the rest of you will receive some gifts, and they will be very pretty, and you will say, "Thank you." It does not mean much for a little boy to get a wool sweater, or a little girl something that she can wear to keep her warm during the winter time. That is a real Christmas present is it not? She may not appreciate it as much as a box of candy; but it will be far more useful to her.

Let me tell you of the Christmas gift our Lord gave, that will last for time and for eternity: it will never wear out. Let us go home rich this morning: plenty to wear, plenty to eat, servants to wait on us, and the everlasting assurance of a covenant-keeping God that there shall be no want to them that fear Him. God bless you every one.

Let us pray:

O Lord, we thank Thee for Thine infinite gift. We all need it. We are before Thee this morning as among the most needy on earth.

"We cannot do without Thee,
Thou Saviour of the lost;
Thy precious blood redeemed us
At such tremendous cost."

May Thy Holy Spirit woo many to Thyself this morning,
for Thy name's sake, Amen.

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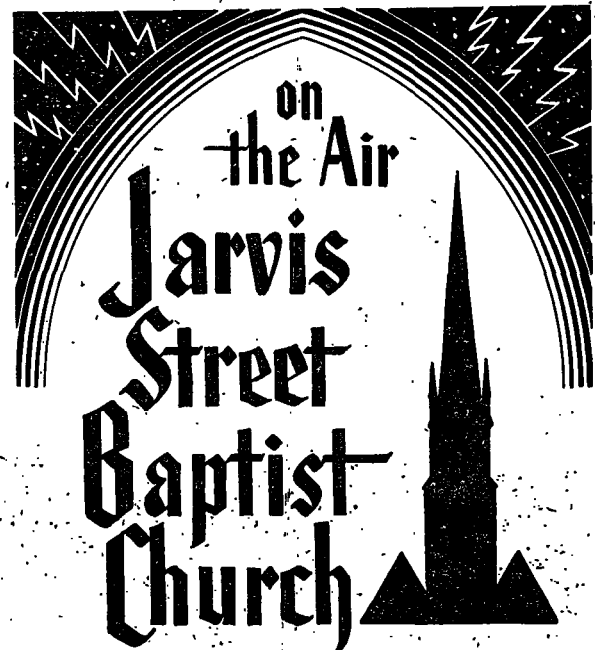
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The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation of Christ

By Dr. George B. Fletcher

Toronto Baptist Seminary

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

CHRIST had a real being and existence before His incarnation. He was with His Father from all eternity, before any of the creatures came out of the womb of nothing (Proverbs 8:29, 30). The great truth of Christ's incarnation is this that at the same instant His body was conceived, or framed of the substance of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, and His soul created and united to it, in that very instant did the Son of God, the Second Person of the glorious Trinity, assume the whole nature at once, and take it into union with His Divine Person, and so was made or became a real and true man by that assumption, the God-Man, Christ Jesus. Hence, it is said in John 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The conception of our blessed Saviour in the womb of the Virgin Mary was a miracle of the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Third Person of the glorious Trinity, and constituted a phase of His work with respect to the Advent of Christ for the redemption of the election of grace. Consider then the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit in the New Creation, especially with respect to the conception and birth of Christ, the Head of the New Humanity.

I. WHY WAS CHRIST BORN OF A VIRGIN?

1. Christ was born of a Virgin in agreement with the first promise of man's redemption included in the words of judgment spoken to Satan upon the Fall of Adam, the Federal and Representative Head of the human race. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her (the Virgin Mary) seed; it (He, that is, Christ) shall bruise (crush) thy head, and thou (Satan) shall (but) bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

2. Christ was born of a Virgin to fulfill ancient prophecy. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The mother of Jesus was that Virgin spoken of by Isaiah in the light of Matthew 1:18: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." Christ as God had no mother, and as man no father, but His mother as man was Mary.

3. Christ was born of a Virgin for by reason of being so born the holiness of His nature was effectively secured. This exempted Him from the stain of original sin of Adam's first offense, which His nature wholly escaped in that He received it not as others do in ordinary generation wherein original sin is propagated from father to son; but this, being extraordinarily produced, was a most pure and holy thing (Luke 1:35). Christ was an extraordinary Person, and another Adam; and therefore it was necessary He should be produced in a new way.

4. Christ was born of a Virgin to fulfil Jeremiah's prophecy: "For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth. A WOMAN SHALL COMPASS A MAN" (Jeremiah 31:22). There are four ways of generating life. (1)

The natural way — by a man and woman. (2) By man without the woman, as was Eve taken from Adam's side. (3) Without either man or woman, as was Adam. (4) By woman without the man, as was Jesus our Lord. This was a "New Thing" — a woman shall conceive without the man.

II. CONSIDER THE FRAMING OF CHRIST'S HUMAN NATURE IN THE WOMB OF THE VIRGIN MARY.

The framing of Christ's human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary is declared to be by the power of the Holy Spirit; thus the humanity of Christ was framed and taken into union with Deity in the One Person of Christ. The manner was miraculous and supernatural, not by generation according to the course of nature, but by the extraordinary and supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit. The matter was a true body and a reasonable soul. The body was prepared by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit of the substance of the Virgin Mary; otherwise He could not be the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. The Holy Spirit might have created His body out of nothing, or framed it of the dust of the ground, as He did the body of Adam. But in such a case, though He would have been a man like one of us, yet He would not have been of kin to us, because it would not have been a nature derived from Adam, the common parent of us all. Our Saviour's soul, created by the Holy Spirit, was infused into His body when it was fully organized to receive it. It is evident that the Holy Spirit did not beget Christ by communicating to Him of His essence; therefore, the Holy Spirit is not the Father of Christ, though the human nature of Christ was conceived by His power in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and of her substance. As He could not have been real man without a real body and reasonable soul, which are the two essential and constituent parts of man, so He could not have borne the punishment of his people's sins, if He had not suffered in both. Man had forfeited both soul and body to divine justice, and should have suffered in both for ever in hell. Therefore, Christ, when He substituted Himself in the room and stead of sinners, suffered both in His body and in His soul. The sufferings of His body were with exquisite torture and pain, but His soul sufferings were much greater (Isaiah 53:10; Matthew 26:38; Luke 22:44).

III. CONSIDER THE PERSONAL UNION OF THE MANHOOD WITH THE GODHEAD IN THE ONE PERSON OF CHRIST.

1. When Christ assumed our nature, sin excepted, it was not united to His Person as the three Persons in the Godhead are united among themselves. They each equally possess all there is of the Divine essence or nature, and have but one mind and the same nature and will. But in Christ there are two distinct natures and wills, but One Person.

2. These two natures in the One Person of Christ were

not united physically as the soul and body are united in a man, for death dissolves that union, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). But this union of the Manhood with the Godhead in the One Person of Christ is indissoluble. When our Saviour died on the Cross, His soul was severed from His body for a time, but they both were still united to the Second Person of the Trinity as much as ever.

3. Nor is this union of the Manhood with the Godhead in the One Person of Christ such a mystical union as that between Christ and believers. For though believers are said to be in Christ and Christ in them, yet they are not One Person with Christ.

4. The human nature is so united with the divine nature in the One Person of Christ as that each nature still retains its own essential properties distinct. As the soul and the body are united and make one person, yet the soul is not changed into the perfections of the body, nor the body into the perfections of the soul, so the human nature and the divine nature are united in the One Person of Christ, yet so as the one nature is not changed into the other. He took upon Him the form of a Servant, but lost not the form of God (Philippians 2:5-7). The glory of His Deity was not diminished though it was eclipsed or obscured under the veil of our humanity, sin excepted (Hebrews 2:14-18; 10:21). In the incarnation of Christ, the human nature is not swallowed up by the divine, nor changed into it, nor confounded with it: but they are so one, that they remain two still; One Person in two natures, containing the glorious perfections of the Divinity, and the weakness of the humanity. The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ.

At the very moment that the Son of God took human nature, sin excepted, into union with His eternal Personality, at that very instant, He spoke the words of Hebrews 10:7: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me — compare Psalm 40:6-8) to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:5-7). At that very moment, in His eternal consciousness as the Son of God He said, "What the sacrifices and blood of bulls and goats could not do, I have come according to the eternal counsels of the Godhead, to do by the taking of this body prepared Me by the Holy Spirit, in which I will bear the sins of My people and make atonement for their souls." In His human nature — His body bearing our sins (1 Peter 2:24) and His soul made an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10) — He offered Himself an atoning sacrifice without spot through the eternal Spirit to God upon the altar of His Divine nature (Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:18-20). Therefore, the righteousness wrought out by Christ's active and passive obedience in His human nature is called the righteousness of God. The blood shed in the human nature is the blood of God (Acts 20:28). Consequently, the Lord of Life and Glory could be crucified, and for this reason it could be said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven" (John 3:13; see also John 6:62; 16:28).

IV. CONSIDER THE EFFECT OF THIS INDISSOLUBLE UNION OF THE TWO NATURES IN THE ONE PERSON OF CHRIST.

Remember the properties of each nature in the Person

of Christ remain distinct: the one eternal, infinite, unlimited, immense; and the other had a beginning, finite, and limited. The human nature is not merged with the divine nature, nor the divine nature become humanized, nor the two natures mixed and mingled so as to form a third or one of a different kind by the blending of the two.

1. The first effect of this union is the preeminence to and above all other individuals of the human race. "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Psalm 89:19).

2. The second effect of this union is the perfect holiness and impeccability of Christ, that is, His perfect sinlessness. The Father "made him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," which we could never have been made, if he had been tainted with any sin. He that needed redemption himself could never have purchased redemption for us.

3. The third effect of this union is the communication of all grace in the highest degree upon the human nature of Christ (John 1:16; 3:34, 35).

4. The fourth effect of this union is that the human nature of Christ has received high and glorious exaltation after His death by reason of being united to the Son of God. "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Hebrews 1:13).

V. CONSIDER THE ENDS OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION.

1. It was to show forth the glory of God. The glory of the Father's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise (1 John 4:9, 10, 14); the glory of the Holy Spirit's power in the miraculous conception of Christ's human nature (Luke 1:35); and the glory of the Son in the voluntariness of His assuming the human nature for the redemption and salvation of lost sinners. Glory to God in the Highest!

2. It was to become our *Goel*, or near kinsman; in order to have the right to redeem us from the law, its curse and condemnation; and that we might receive the adoption of sons and every other blessing included in or connected with redemption (Galatians 4:4-7). Oh, the amazing love and astonishing condescension of the Son of God to be born of a woman in order that in our nature by the active obedience of His life in keeping the precept of the law both in the letter and spirit, and by His passive obedience in death, suffering the penalty which the law threatened against the transgressor, He might provide a perfect righteousness which is imputed to the believing, trusting soul unto justification of life (Romans 4:6-8)! Therefore our natures, as redeemed by the blood of Christ, have capacity for the eternal regions of light and shall dwell in the immediate Presence of God by His saving grace. He that united the human nature to His Divine nature can also so unite every believing soul to Himself by the miracle of regeneration that they shall never be separated from His redeeming love (1 Corinthians 6:17; Romans 8:38, 39).

My God, my Creator,
The heavens did bow
To ransom offenders,
And stooped very low;
The body prepared
By the Father assumes,
And on the kind errand
Most joyfully comes.

Oh, wonder of wonders!
Astonished I gaze,
To see in the manger
The Ancient of Days;
The angels proclaiming
The Stranger forlorn,
And telling the shepherds
That Jesus is born.

For thousands of sinners
The Lord bowed His head;
For thousands of sinners
He groaned and He bled;
My spirit rejoices,
The work it is done;
My soul is redeemed;
Salvation is won.

My God is returned
To glory on high;
When death makes a passage,
Then to Him I'll fly:
And join in the song
Of all praise through His blood,
To Three who are One
In the essence of God.

(E. L. SCHLECKT)

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD IN JARVIS STREET

THE services in Jarvis Street Baptist Church on Sunday, December 15th, were appropriate to the Christmas season, as the saints of the Lord remembered with gratitude the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth for our redemption.

In the morning Dr. H. C. Slade preached a message of comfort and encouragement on the subject, "Peace and Safety" (Psalm 119:165). That which we know to be the highest principle in the universe is love (1 Cor. 13:13). When the lawyer questioned our Saviour concerning this matter, He answered that love "is the first and great commandment." The degree of this love is deep; it is hearty affection, not a cold, shallow thing. Love is the surest test of the condition of the soul. A person may claim to have high principles of righteousness, and live a moral life, but the true criterion is love. Do you love? This is the acid test. The church at Ephesus was rebuked for having left its first love. The love of God is imparted in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Love produces peace.

We have given to us in this text a true Christian character: "Great peace have they which love thy law." What is meant by "thy law"? The Word of God in its entirety, the revealed will of God. Do you love the Word of God, the things of heaven? Do you seek those things which are above? Then God has worked in your heart and life. A Christian loves to hear the old, old story and has no wish to lower the standard of the Gospel. To love the Word is more than to study, search and obey the Word.

Here is a peace which cannot be disturbed, peace of conscience, peace regarding the future, the perfection of tranquility (Isa. 26:3), the peace which passeth all understanding (Phil. 4:7). Dr. Slade mentioned the testimony of Rev. John Byers in Sunnybrook Hospital concerning the grace of God in the time of severe trial. This text comforted the great Spurgeon after he was censured by the Baptist Union.

Those who love the law of the Lord have a secure position: "Nothing shall offend them." There shall be no cause of stumbling, but they shall be steadfast and stable. All temptations shall be withstood, all threats and trials. Is there someone here with no peace, no stability? Trust Christ.

In the evening message Dr. Slade recommended the Gospel which gives such peace and safety. The text chosen was the testimony of the Apostle Paul; "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15). The grace of God had cured him of his Pharisaism, his guilt, condemnation, wretchedness and ruin. It gave him morality, righteousness and perfect acceptance before God. Paul had been given life, joy, dignity of office, Christian usefulness and heavenly hope. Therefore, he desires to magnify the One who had done all this for him.

This was the natural expression of a redeemed heart. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so and tell of the wonders of Christ and the glories of His marvellous grace. By this means Paul would discharge a heavy obligation. He was debtor to all men, and the Gospel had been given to him as a sacred trust to be delivered, to be recommended in the Lord's name. Can we who have the bread of life withhold it from those who are starving?

The glorious message of the Gospel is summarized in this text, as it is in the familiar text, John 3:16. It is a soul-saving text and perhaps needs but to be repeated in your hearing. It is a faithful saying, a faithful doctrine, a faithful declaration. It implies the pre-existence of Christ and speaks of His amazing humility and condescension. He left the glories of heaven; the Ancient of days, the Eternal One, left the abode of purity to come to a world of corruption and sin. He left the light of heaven for the sphere of darkness and death, and came from the adoration of the angels to earth to receive the abuse of men (John 1:11). He left the eternal throne to be born a Babe in the manger, cradled in all humility! What condescension! This is the Christmas message. This condescension was voluntary on His part.

His mission in coming to earth was "to save sinners". Sin is the foulest, most hateful, hideous and loathsome thing in the universe. It has come into every human heart. Today sin is described on a moral basis, as it may appear to people in respectable society. But not necessarily. Sin is rebellion against God's law; it is the despising of God's mercy. Opposition to Christ is sin in its fullest development. Many people will never be saved, will never go to heaven, because they will not confess their sinfulness. Christ saves from sin, from its guilt, condemnation and power, and some day He will save us from the very presence of sin and present us faultless before the throne of His glory.

Consider the absolute certainty of this Gospel: "This is a faithful saying." It is a proved doctrine, an accredited statement. Scripture was fulfilled in the coming of Christ, and the fact that He came to save from sin is proved in the experience of multitudes of people. There are sayings and reports that are true, but they do not seriously concern us. This is vital; everything depends on your acceptance. If you accept it, you are a saved man; if you reject it, you are still a lost soul. It is not the acceptance you would give a neighbour who comes to see you for a few minutes, but it is the acceptance of a bridegroom who receives his bride into his home to live with her till death shall them part. May many this Christmas season accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

This clear and strong presentation of the Gospel message was broadcast over station CHWO, Oakville, 1250, and was doubtless heard by a great multitude outside the church auditorium. The prayers of God's people will follow the message, given to the glory of God.

—O.L.C.

The Time of Visitation

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee; and compass thee round . . . and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."—Luke 19:42-44.

THUS did our Saviour weep over the city of Jerusalem, His heart torn with sorrow because of the unbelief of official Judaism with its tragic consequences. In lowly guise, riding upon the foal of an ass, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, Christ had entered the city. The whole multitude of the disciples had praised the Lord, but the Pharisees and rulers were filled with bitter hatred. In a few short days they would have their way, as they thought, although the God of heaven was ordering all things, and Jesus of Nazareth would be brought to trial, condemned and crucified.

Ever forgiving those who mistreated Him, saying again and again, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do," with no thought for His own sorrow, the Saviour was filled with anguish at the prospect of the judgment which in a few short years would fall upon the city because of the sin of its people. How He longed for them to turn to the Father in repentance! Salvation, deliverance, peace and blessing were offered to them, but they deliberately rejected all offers of mercy, repudiating the One who had come to bring them pardon. Scorning God's mercy, they must receive God's judgment. How tragic it was!

This fateful rejection of the Son of God was no new thing for Jerusalem, "the city of the great King". On this occasion the enmity of the unbelieving Jews was called forth when they heard the songs of grateful praise on the part of the disciples, who said, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." Some thirty years before the angelic hosts had welcomed that same King who had come in the name of the Lord, and their song was similar: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." But who of the officers and religious leaders of Jerusalem had lifted up their voices to praise Him? He had come as a little Babe, born of a virgin in Bethlehem, just as the prophets had said, but on their part He was unwelcomed and unwanted. They knew not the things that belonged to their peace; they knew not the time of visitation.

This wilful ignorance was three-fold: they knew not the time of visitation; they would not receive the Visitor; they refused to take advantage of the purpose of His coming.

These Jews should have known that this was their day: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day," the Saviour said, and "thou knowest not the time of thy visitation." The fact of this visitation from on high, this period of special manifestation of Divine grace to men had been prophesied from the very beginning. God had said that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. Moses had prophesied, saying, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thy brethren, like unto me." Balaam, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah, among others, had likewise spoken of this Divine visitation. God would come down among His people. The time, place and manner of the birth of the Son of God had been clearly foretold. They lived in that day, and yet their eyes were still upon the distant future. With their minds closed to the truth because of their sin and disobedience, they were clinging to their own notions concerning the time

of God's visitation and failed to realize that the long-expected day had already arrived. Devoted souls, like Anna and Simeon, who with faith and confidence in the Word of God were living in expectation of the Messiah's coming, had received Him joyfully. They had seen the salvation which God had been preparing. Like Abraham, they rejoiced to see the day of Christ. But the Jews as a whole continued on their way, worshipping formally in the temple, unconcerned about the great, great events which were taking place before their very eyes.

We are still living in the age of grace; this present time might well be termed for many the time of visitation: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." But still, as of old, there is no room for the Saviour in the inn of human lives. Men are so concerned with business or pleasure that they travel along life's pathway as though the Saviour had never come, as though He were not near, ready to deliver those who call upon Him in faith. Alas! the day of God's patience may soon be over, so far as many are concerned, and their day of judgment may soon commence, because they knew not the time of visitation, they knew not that this was their day.

As the Jews were wilfully ignorant of the time of visitation, so were they woefully neglectful toward the Person of the Visitor whom God had sent. The lowly shepherds believed the message of the angels and hastened to Bethlehem to see those things which had come to pass. When they saw the Christ, they worshipped Him. The magi, to whom His coming had been revealed, also accepted Him as the heavenly King. But the majority of the Jews would have none of Him: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Their eyes looked upon the Saviour as He walked in and out among them, as He taught in their temple and synagogues, and as He healed the sick. He spake as never man spake, He lived as never man lived, and acted as never man acted, but in their blindness they would not accept Him. Seeing, they saw not. It was the same throughout His whole earthly life; in His babyhood, His childhood, youth and manhood He was despised and forsaken of men; they hid, as it were, their faces from Him.

In this our day the Saviour is still rejected by the masses. Many ministers and leaders in the religious, political, social and educational realms think of Christ as only a man, a good man, perhaps, but just one like themselves. Some even go so far as to say that He, being a mere man, is fallible; that He is the product of His times and not an authoritative guide, that at times He compromised. They believe not God's record concerning His Son, and as a consequence, their eyes are blinded as to His true identity. Like the multitude in that day, they know Him not.

The majority of the Jews were ignorant, also, in regard to the purposes and the results of the Advent of Christ; who must say to them, "If thou hadst known . . . the things that belong unto thy peace!" For centuries the Jews had been in bondage to a foreign power. From the time of the captivity until the day when the Lord spoke to them, except for a brief period, they had been down-trodden and forced to submit to the control of alien rulers. They had longed

for release, for peace. Yet, it had not come, at least so they thought. But the promised "Prince of Peace" was in their midst, the one who would guide their feet into the way of peace, and they knew it not. They erred, not knowing the Scriptures; the whole world was in turmoil, and they were watching for one who would defeat their foes and bring peace to their land. They were longing for peace from their foes without, but spurned the Christ because He came to bring peace within. He had come as God manifest in the flesh; God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. This peace of reconciliation with God was utterly beyond them because their hearts were darkened with sin. They shunned the light, lest their deeds be manifest. The peace of soul which the Lord promised to those who would come to Him, that peace which He alone can give, was something which they could not understand, because they would not. Their true peace, as a nation, as a city and as individuals rested upon their attitude to the Lord Jesus Christ. They scorned Him and utterly repudiated His mission of bringing spiritual peace to their hearts. They

knew not the things which belonged unto their peace.

This is a restless age in which we live. Men feverishly strive for gain, for fame, for prestige. In the political world there is much talk of peace, but little of it in evidence. If people would but turn their eyes to the one Mediator, to the Saviour who died that we might have peace with God, the peace of God and peace with our fellowmen! Instead of that, like the Jews of old, they close their eyes to their real eternal interests and seek in worldly ways to bring some order out of the current confusion. It is still true that many do not know the things which belong unto their peace.

At this season of the year when our minds are especially drawn to the Saviour's coming upon earth for our salvation, may the hearts of many turn to the Lord, that His Spirit may enlighten them so that they may recognize that this is the day of their visitation! May they believe His Word that Christ came to save them, and that His peace will be the portion of all who truly trust Him and commit their way unto Him!

—O.L.C.

The Christian and Christmas

Rev. G. A. Adams, B.A., B.D.,

Registrar of Toronto Baptist Seminary

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVEN years ago on December 25th Christ was probably 5 years 2 months old. The traditional *anno domini* is manifestly wrong in that there is proof that Herod the Great, who sought to destroy the babe Jesus, died in the year 4 B.C. Abbot Dionysius Exiguus of the sixth century, upon whose reckonings we date our years, evidently was in error. The reference to flocks being in the fields at the time of birth likewise suggests December as unlikely, for sheep were usually taken into the folds in November and kept in till March.

This consideration, coupled with evident paganism that is associated for many with Christmas, may direct us to consider two matters.

I. Should Christmas Be Observed by Christians?

Some very fine believers following some of the Puritans say nay. The excessive eating and drinking, the increasing commercialization, the occupation of Christ's place by Santa Claus, together with the lack of a specific injunction in the Word of God encourage them in this attitude. While we do not share this opinion, we must respect the convictions of these Christians. In Roman 14:6f. we read: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."

Sometimes the opposers of Christmas try, in any discussion, to force their adversaries into the false position of condoning all the related evils because the day is even celebrated. This trick of logic is invalid. Many good things have been corrupted by tradition and usage. The two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper may be cited as examples, but that does not lead Baptists to the position of our Salvation Army friends who ignore the ordinances altogether. No Christian will condone gluttony and intoxication. In a country with a Christian heritage it is not surprising that the majority of our countrymen, who of course,

are not born-again people, have a secularized version of Christmas.

However, is there any precedent for the practice and can the observance of Christmas contribute anything to the people of God? We reply by reminding ourselves that man is a social creature, and it is not good that he should dwell alone. Families and even nations are divine institutions. He who voluntarily defies this principle of life pays the penalty by becoming an oddity. Religion for Israel was not individualistic in the main. Progressive revelation leads from the material to the spiritual, and from the nation to the individual. Joel predicted that a new era would come when he declared: "And it shall come to pass, that *whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered . . ." (Joel 2:32). However, the social aspect of religion is never destroyed for we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). One of the apocalyptic visions of the church is that of a foursquare city (Rev. 21:2).

Among the provisions made by Jehovah-Jireh for this social nature was that of the feast of the Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. For these the faithful would congregate in Jerusalem often from various parts of the Mediterranean world. The Feast of Tabernacles especially was a very joyful occasion, so much so that penitential tears at Ezra's reading of the law were quickly checked on one such occasion. In the New Testament we have references to feasts in connection with weddings and with the prodigal's return and then there was the *Agape*, or love feast, which primitive Christians observed. Clement of Alexandria, who belonged to the Second Century, A.D., makes reference to the festival of Christmas. This of course was centuries before the church of Rome came to lord it over western Christendom. We can well understand how people trained in the observance of joyful feasts should follow the precedent of the angelic host and celebrate Christ's birthday. One of the happiest notes of Scripture is that of "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . ." (Isa. 9:6). Yes, there is no specific injunction in God's Word to observe

the day (neither is there specific warrant for Sunday Schools, missionary meetings, etc.) but how natural such a celebration was, and how useful to keep man reminded of such a cardinal doctrine as that of the Incarnation.

So to the opposers of Christmas we would write a reminder of the need for Christian liberty in "matters indifferent", and add a caution against the "danger of the spiritual pride which suggests superior spirituality because of non-observance. If a choice has to be made between geniality and moroseness, this writer will choose the former, feeling that a spiritual observance of Christmas is far more beneficial than indulging in critical disgust.

III. How then should Christmas be observed?

Negatively, the Christian will not indulge in excessive eating, for he must be temperate in all things. He will not be guilty of rash spending, for he is a steward of his Lord. As lying is evil, he will no doubt want to avoid deception about Santa Claus.

On the positive side, he may wish to satisfy his social nature by renewing world-wide contacts through the mailing of seasonal greetings. He may wish to entertain and be entertained by his friends. Likewise he may wish to be reminded of his Christian responsibility towards the sick and the needy. But above all he should enjoy the fellowship of the saints and engage in joyful thanksgiving on account of the advent of the Saviour. In recent years the writer has come to appreciate greatly a Christmas morning service, but whether this be adopted or not, no doubt some distinctive service in connection with this festivity will be appreciated.

At a time of year when multitudes are accustomed to present gifts to their loved ones, have you ever considered making a special thank-offering unto the Lord Jesus on the day traditionally observed as His birthday? The precedent of the Magi may well be noted. As a suggestion for a way of giving unto God, what about such worthy causes as your local church, THE GOSPEL WITNESS, or Toronto Baptist Seminary?

We submit that such a spiritual celebration of Christmas would be the most effective way of countering the increasing secularization.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Volume 21 Fourth Quarter Lesson 13 December 29, 1957

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

PROMISES OF BLESSING

Lesson Text: Malachi 3.

Golden Text: "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."—Malachi 3:17.

I. The Coming of the Blessed One: verses 1-6.

The Old Testament prophets were reformers, in the true sense of the word. They were sent of God to declare to the people of their day the flaming message of rebuke for the prevalent sin and apostasy, but with a message of encouragement to the faithful remnant who continued to fear God. It was their task to call the nation to repentance.

Among the sins of God's people which merited rebuke was the habit of murmuring against Jehovah — against His Person, His commands and His Providential dealings (Numb. 14:2, 29; 26:63, 65; 2 Cor. 10:10). The charges laid at their door brought forth either an impudent denial or an insolent challenge: "Wherein have we despised thy name?" (1:6); "Wherefore?" (2:14); "What have we spoken against thee?" (3:13). Beholding the seeming prosperity of the wicked, they went so far as to charge the Lord Himself with unrighteousness: "Where is the God of judgment?" (Mal. 2:17).

To these sceptical sinners, as well as to the discouraged believing remnant, the prophet, speaking by inspiration, announced the coming of the Messiah, the messenger of the covenant (Isa. 63:9). Of late there had been no Divine intervention, and evil seemed to hold undisputed sway, but the Lord would surely come; He would break the long silence (Psa. 50:1-6; Habb. 2:20; Hagg. 2:7). The Lord would send a messenger before Him to prepare the hearts of the people for His coming (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 4:5, 6). That messenger was John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 3:3; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 7:27). It is significant that the word "Malachi" means "my messenger".

The children of Israel had long been awaiting the coming of the Messiah, hoping to be delivered from political bondage, but they did not realize that their greatest need was for redemption from the bondage of sin. The prophet announced that the Messiah would surely come, and when He came, He would purify them and refine them, even as gold and silver are refined by fire of judgment and purging (Job 23:10; Isa. 1:25; 4:3, 4; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 4:1; Matt. 3:10-12). Who could stand before the Holy One of God (Rev. 6:15-17)? When purged from sin, they would be able to present offerings which would be acceptable to the Lord (Isa. 1; 10:20; Mal. 1:11).

It was because of the faithfulness of God, who changeth never (Numb. 23:19; Rom. 11:29; Jas. 1:17), but is the same yesterday, to-day and forever (Psa. 102:25-28; Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8) that the Israelites, the descendants of Jacob, had not been utterly consumed (Lam. 3:22; Amos 9:9). God was faithful to His covenant with the patriarchs.

II. The Conditions of Blessing: verses 7-18.

The Divine Surgeon carefully diagnosed the spiritual illness of the inhabitants of the land and plainly declared the cause of their present distress. In spite of their pretended innocence when, blinded with pride, they argued against every charge, they were arraigned before the bar of God's justice and pronounced guilty of robbery against the Most High. Wherein had they robbed Him? They had withheld from Him the glory due His name (Psa. 29:2), the obedience of their hearts to which He was entitled (Isa. 29:13), the tithes which He had commanded (Gen. 14:10; 28:22; Lev. 27:30; Numb. 18:21, 24; Deut. 26:2) and the offerings which they had promised in token of love and gratitude to Him (Exod. 23:19; 34:26).

To experience a return to His favour, the people must return to the Lord (Deut. 28:1-3; Isa. 55:7; Zech. 1:3). To prove that the Lord was true to His promise, let them take Him at His word (1 Kings 18:24, 37-39; 1 Chron. 21:26; 2 Cor. 9:6-8). Let them bring into His courts the whole tithe (Prov. 3:9, 10; 1 Chron. 26:20; 2 Chron. 31:11; Neh. 10:38; 38:10-12) and generous offerings (Exod. 22:29). If this were done, instead of resting under the curse of God, they would experience blessing (2 Chron. 7:14). Moreover, the Lord would undertake for them and fight for them against their enemies, giving them complete victory (2 Chron. 20:15-17; Isa. 54:17) and also economic prosperity (Deut. 28:11, 12) and a good name among the nations (Deut. 28:13; Mal. 2:9).

They must cease their sinful complaining against the Lord, for they had been murmuring in the time of adversity that it did not pay to serve Him (Job 1:9; 21:7; Psa. 73:13, 14; Jer. 12:1), since to them it seemed as though the wicked always prospered, whereas the righteous frequently suffered adversity (Psa. 73:1-12; 94:3).

In spite of the general unbelief and wickedness, there were some, the faithful remnant, who remained true to the Lord (Isa. 1:9; Jer. 15:11-21; Rom. 11:5). They were His chosen servants (Rev. 17:14), the ones who knew the secret of the Lord (Psa. 25:14) and had their dwelling in the atmosphere of His presence (Psa. 91:1; John 15:7). Upon them He would shower His blessing (Ezek. 34:26). They feared the Lord; that is, they loved, honoured, revered and obeyed Him (Psa. 19:9; Mal. 4:2). They thought and meditated upon His name, thinking of what He was and what He had done for them (Psa. 1:1, 2; Mal. 2:5, 6). They spoke often of Him one to another, bearing testimony concerning His goodness. Men of earth might despise them, but the Lord took notice of them and He would remember them when the books were opened (Psa. 56:8; Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12). They would be His own precious jewels, the crown of His glory (Dan. 12:3; 1 Thess. 2:19, 20). May we all be among those chosen faithful ones who bring joy to the heart of their Master and Lord!