

# OUR MATCHLESS LORD

J. B. WATSON



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

THE late Mr. J. B. Watson was a gifted preacher of the Word of God. His study notes reveal the meticulous care he took in the composition of his addresses, which in many instances were written out in full as he intended to deliver them. The writings of such a man retain something of the urgency and freshness of the spoken word. Most of the papers in this book took shape through constant use in preaching and represent the final form of several fully written drafts. Further editing has been limited to what seemed needful for their presentation in book form.

In their main theme they epitomize much of Mr. Watson's oral ministry, which though wide in scope centred largely upon doctrine concerning the person of Christ. This but shows the firm hold on his mind of the text that led to his conversion: *'these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name'* (John 20. 31).

In the selection of material Mr. Watson's son, Mr. John R. Watson, has given valuable help. A brief foreword, kindly contributed by one who knew the author intimately, will fittingly serve as an introduction.

These papers were written with a single aim—the glory of Christ. May they lead to a fuller knowledge of 'the things concerning Himself'.

R.R.



## FOREWORD

THERE is more than one way of dwelling 'at ease in Zion'. In these words the prophet Amos addressed the sinners who settled in Jerusalem. Theirs was a false sense of security, and they were warned of impending doom (Amos 6. 1). The people of God today have their spiritual home, however, in the heavenly Zion: there, because of the work of Christ, they may dwell secure.

The author of these papers was one who was 'at ease' (in the best sense) in the whole realm of divine things. Whatever his pursuit might be, he was at ease before the Lord. I can visualize him, full of quiet humour during a meal-time; or in his study, reading aloud some extracts from a book and making shrewd comments as he read; or standing before some great assemblage of people, a veritable prince of preachers . . . and always one might discern a life being lived constantly in the light of God.

Behind all the varied interests and occupations of J. B. Watson lay a singleness of purpose and a deep humility. Of him it could be said that, to him, to live was Christ. His true humility shone out in all his ways; though essentially reserved, he was the most approachable of men. His ease of spirit could be seen as he would sit—for he was always a ready listener—hearing some of the problems of young people, and no one could feel awkward in his company. The young would meet with a smiling welcome as they spoke with him; while older

persons would find in him a blending of courteous deference and ready helpfulness.

His 'ease' was accompanied by diligent workmanship: he was one of the most intellectually alive persons I have ever known—always browsing, pondering, and this habit developed in him a deep insight into Scripture that was altogether beyond the ordinary. His thinking was ever Christ-centred: he would invariably test the merits of some new version of Scripture by turning to the first verse of John's Gospel and noting how the translator rendered those vital words. From that centre he ranged over wide fields of thought, yet was always able to spare an extra moment for the unexpected idea, giving kindly consideration to all that came his way but without hastily committing himself to the viewpoint. At such times, his Northern caution would show itself; but if he found, on reflection, that an idea was good and right, he would accept it and take it into his mental realm as a friend.

His ease before God was apparent in his prayers, which brought one into the immediate presence of the Lord. His communion gave tone to his praying, whether in the home or in public: he was so evidently at home with God, though always without giving any impression of undue familiarity. The fact is that, though an original thinker, he never departed from the source of our most holy Faith. His ministry on the person of Christ was a mark of the man: I recall the profound impression made by his message on 'The Virgin Birth' that is now included in these pages; nor shall I ever forget the tense, expectant interest in a gathering of close on 1,000 people as he gave the address on 'The Holy Trinity'—reproduced in the recently published Memoir '*J. B. Watson*'. He was no one-string minstrel: whether theological, devotional or practical, his messages went right home, remaining clearly imprinted on the mind. No haphazard arrows

flew from the bow of this doughty warrior for God!

J. B. Watson was my friend over many years, and I count it a privilege to commend this volume to the Christian public, confident that no reader of these chapters will fail in his search to learn more from them of Jesus, our Saviour and Lord.

G. C. D. HOWLEY





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## CHAPTER I

### THE INCARNATE GOD

THE Christian fundamental known by the theological term Incarnation is a most startling concept: the most startling ever announced to mankind. It sets forth that the Creator has visited this corner of the Creation in the outward habit of His creature, Man: that God has come into our world in manhood taken up for the ends of redemption.

This coming of God into human affairs was not a 'state visit' attended by all the majesty and pomp which are the fitting habiliments of the Eternal. On the contrary, it was, so to speak, 'incognito'. God dwelt among men in manhood's form with the insignia of divinity so closely veiled that mankind at large were unaware of the identity of the august Visitant. 'He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not.'

This stupendous event took place in the midst of a nation to whom God had aforetime little by little revealed Himself in preparation for this fuller revelation. But the truth concerning the Person, message and mission of the divine Visitant was not understood by that people. 'He came to his own (things) and his own (people) received him not.'

Yet He made known His message and mission, and the true nature of His Person was revealed to those who received His words. To these engraced ones were granted new capacities by which they were enabled to penetrate the humble disguise He wore. They saw the grey mantle of His lowly humanity open for an instant

now and then and here and there, disclosing the glittering orders of Deity shining upon His breast. 'We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.' And those to whom this knowledge was given found that all their souls had yearned for and sought He brought to them, for He was 'full of grace and truth.'

He was true Man in His entry into humanity by the door of being 'born of a woman'. In this He seems only a man, but even here He differs from all other men, for He had no human father. The mode of His conception was unique. The angel announced to the Virgin Mary, His mother, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born of thee shall be called holy, the Son of God.'

He was true Man in His human lot. He passed through the stages of childhood, youth, and manhood: He laboured with His hands: was poor in circumstances, a traveling, penniless preacher. Yet here also He differs from all others. As a boy of twelve He displayed a clear sense of mission. He enriched many, though Himself poor. Unschooled, He was wiser than His teachers. As Teacher, He stands alone. He claimed for His words that they were imperishable, saying, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall never pass away.' They were the words of eternal life. After nineteen centuries His claim for them wears well.

He was true Man in His subjection to God's law. He was made under the law—a Jew entering the legal covenant by circumcision, attending the national religious festivals, regular in synagogue attendance, versed in the Old Testament—true Man.

Yet here also He differs from all others. There was no flaw in His obedience. He furnishes the solitary instance in all history of a good man entirely without any con-

sciousness of personal fault. 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' was His challenge. 'I do always those things which please him (the Father)' was His claim.

He died, the common lot of man. His was a death which in its outward form had been the lot of many others. In it He knew physical pain, weakness, weariness, till at length He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. Nothing could better announce the reality of His manhood than this—He died.

Yet in His death He was different from all other men. He was unique in the claim He made as to the future influence of His death. 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' His own interpretation of its significance was likewise unmatched. 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' He spoke also of His blood being 'shed for many for the remission of sins.' So the death by crucifixion, shameful and ignominious, proved different from all other deaths ever endured. The behaviour of the physical universe at that hour announced the unparalleled nature of the event, for all nature was shrouded in a supernatural darkness and was torn with tremendous convulsions. Most amazing of all, His death had the astonishing sequel of resurrection on the third day after it took place.

True Man but more than Man. That He was divine in the absolute sense is His own claim. 'I and the Father are one.' It was the conviction of those brought into closest contact with Him, as for example, John the Evangelist, whose last words are 'We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.'

The truth of the Incarnation is that God has become

Man in Jesus Christ. It is not that at some time in His earthly course Jesus Christ became God. He was ever God and did not, yea could not, cease to be God when He became Man. He took up Manhood into His Deity and, ceasing not to be what He had ever been, became in humiliation what He had never before been.

There is a vital and necessary link between our Lord's Deity and His work of propitiation. Not that one man was made unique but that God came into the world in servant form for us men. Dr. Moule has well said, 'A Saviour who is not quite God is a bridge broken at the further end.' The divine greatness of the Person communicates itself to the work He carried through, and particularly to the death He died. That work abides permanently; its value never lessens. It is all-availing, because He who wrought it, being God in manhood, Creator and Upholder of all things and beings, is greater than the entire sum of the creatures He made.

True God, Perfect Man, One Christ. In Him, deity and humanity are indivisibly united, unconfusedly distinct. May His Name be praised for ever.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DEITY AND MANHOOD OF OUR LORD

Matthew 22. 41-46; Luke 1. 26-35

PROBABLY it is better to limit ourselves in trying to compass so huge a subject in so brief a space; we will confine ourselves chiefly to what is written in the Gospels. We cannot begin better than by thinking of what our Lord Christ taught about His own Person. The Old Testament had foretold the coming of One—Messiah, the hope of the world—and the Jewish people were waiting eagerly for His coming. They well knew He was to come of the house of David, for many of their Scriptures made it clear that that should be His human lineage. But our Lord shows that whilst that was a correct belief it was only a partial belief, for when He said to the leaders here: ‘What think ye of Christ? whose Son is he?’ His intention was to show them that the Messiah was not merely to be Man—that was only part of the truth concerning His Person—but that He was also to be God. And that, I am sure, was an idea that had never entered their thinking.

Our Lord’s birth was foretold by the prophet Micah:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5. 2.

So that the One who was to be born in Bethlehem did not commence His history there; indeed, His coming to Bethlehem was but a stage in an eternal history, for the

Old Testament shows that the Messiah for whom men were taught to wait was to be more than man—He was to link in His own Person true humanity and veritable Deity.

Isaiah 11 speaks of a Branch springing out of Jesse's roots; the same one is spoken of as being 'the root of Jesse' later on in the chapter; and before the Bible closes we find this old problem is being stated again, for Christ in the very last chapter of the Bible says: 'I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star.'

Our Lord frequently asserted pre-existence—that is to say, He claimed that His history did not begin here in time. We all remember how that, in that last High-priestly prayer of His before He went to the Cross, almost His opening petition was this: 'And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was'—a claim for resumption of a place of glory alongside God, a place He had, as He says, anterior to creation itself.

Now Godhead is His, and it is His without any intermission. There are many who think that the stoop into Manhood entailed the relinquishment of His Divinity, but the Scripture nowhere countenances that idea. It is far more in accordance with the testimony of the Bible to say that what happened at the Incarnation was that our Lord took up humanity into His Deity. Deity is unchangeable. A hiatus in Deity is unthinkable; all through the period of His Manhood here it was still true that He was verily God. He made claims that were alone consistent with Godhead. Think, for instance, of the One who to all human seeming was but one of the artisan class, Who had been brought up in a not too reputable village, saying that the day was coming when there would be gathered before Him all nations, and that He would divide them as a shepherd divides his sheep



from the goats, and you will see that for such a task—such judgment of all humanity and the secrets of man—nothing short of omniscience could suffice, and omniscience is an attribute of God. ‘All judgment is committed to the Son’ (John 5. 22).

So that if there be one thing clear in the New Testament it is that our Lord claimed Godhead when He was here in humiliation. That was how those who heard his claim understood His words; they took up stones on one occasion because He made the claim of being equal with God, and He made no attempt to correct the impression He had made. He claimed a unique relationship with God. There is no word that better states this truth than John 1. 18: ‘No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him’. The phrase ‘which is in the bosom of the Father’ has this force, that the Father’s bosom is His native sphere. It is a timeless phrase. It is the only begotten Son who has His being in the bosom of the Father; there, in completest fellowship with God in a timeless condition of co-equality, our Lord, the Son, has ever been. And He regarded Himself, even when He was here upon earth, as still having His habitation in the bosom of the Father.

Yet manhood in Him is equally real with His Deity. The Scripture in the first chapter of Luke shows that His birth was a perfectly natural birth. Do not misunderstand: the birth was natural, but the conception was supernatural. His entry into the world was an entry such as all humanity has made. His growth was normal—‘He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man’ (Luke 2. 52). There was nothing of the prodigy, nothing that was out of time in the development through infancy to childhood, through childhood to manhood. All the stories that the false gospels tell about

the miracles of His childhood are exploded by John in the second chapter of his Gospel; 'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee.' No miracle had come from His hand until then.

In His experiences all that was proper to true humanity befell Him. All the experiences that men have, apart from sin, He knew. Anger swept over His soul: 'He looked round about on them with anger.' He knew what it was to grieve. He knew what weariness, what thirst, what hunger were. He knew what it was to gain information by the ordinary processes by which men gain information. He looked upon a fig tree, seeking fruit thereon. He asked: 'Where have ye laid him?' His experiences were experiences that betoken true humanity.

And yet there was a tremendous difference in His humanity from that of other men, for His humanity was a sinless humanity. There was nothing there that had upon it the stain or spot of evil. Sin is not a proper part of true human nature; it is an intruder there, and it is the object of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus to cast it thence, and to bring a redeemed race home to God, a race from whom all trace of evil will have been for ever banished. So our Lord could turn to those who dogged His footsteps, who hung upon His words, who watched Him, and say: 'Which of you can bring home sin to me?' and there has never been a serious answer to that challenge all down the ages. A sinless humanity.

Moreover, His humanity was not only real in character, it was dependent in its attitude, and that is the true attitude that all men should maintain towards God. They tell us that the meaning of the word Adam—man—is 'an upward looking creature'—that is to say, man was made to receive all his good from God, to walk acknowledging that every blessing came to him from the hand of a beneficent Maker, and to walk in dependence upon

that God. At all times our Lord maintained that attitude. We hear Him telling how that the words He spoke were the words the Father gave Him to speak, and that the the works He did were the works the Father gave Him to do. He waited for His Father's guidance; He brooked no other interference with His pathway; but step by step and stage by stage walked in accordance with the directions given by God, which is the true attitude that man should ever maintain toward his Creator.

His Manhood, too, abides. Man was made for eternity. When God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life humanity was thereby endowed with everlastingness. And our Lord having taken up humanity will wear humanity for ever, for now His humanity is yonder on the Throne of God, glorified. In Psalm 110, verse 1, this truth is taught; for the moment into which David is carried forward, as it were, is the moment of Christ's return from His earthly victories; He is taking His seat again at God's right hand; and David is given to overhear the salutation with which the returning Victor is greeted: 'Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool'; and humanity raised and glorified is there at the pinnacle of power and upon the Throne of God in Christ. It is the guarantee that all who are redeemed by Him shall one day be glorified as He is.

So God has said to Christ, 'Enthroned Thyself'; and wise is the man who agrees with God in this and who, so far as his own life is concerned, has said to the Christ who became man, who walked in dependence upon God, who obeyed even to the death of the Cross, and who has been so highly exalted at God's right hand—happy is that man who says to that Christ 'Enthroned Thyself, be thou the Sovereign of this life of mine.' David by the Spirit called Him Lord, and wise is the man who accords with David in this, and to the Christ Who

is thus enthroned accords the place of lordship over all his life.

How do both deity and humanity dwell in one Person at the same time? How can Christ on the one hand be God and yet be verily man? How did the divine attributes dwell with those that are proper to manhood? How, if He is God and is thus omniscient, does He learn? I do not know. That is a revelation for faith; it is not a subject for prying and investigation. It is one before which we are intended to stand with worshipping hearts and not one into which we are intended to look with our poor cheap microscopes. Nay, here is the revelation—perfect God—perfect Man—one Christ.

Personality in us all is a great deep. ‘Man, know thyself’ said the old philosopher, and we have not got very far even with that study. If that be true of our own personality, consider this infinitely greater mystery—One who compasses in His own Person Deity and Manhood also, so that these two dwell together in Him, and the element of mystery is increased to the nth degree. It is a challenge to faith. The Bible is full of truths which we have no intellectual power to reconcile. In our Lord Jesus Christ dwells Deity; in Him also dwells humanity; how they dwell together in perfect harmony we know not; it is sufficient for faith to bow low at His feet and magnify the grace that brought Him down to our rescue and adore the righteousness which has given Him the place of power at God’s right hand.

May we be kept believing these great fundamental truths of the faith; that our Lord Jesus Christ is not only David’s son, but is also David’s Lord.

### CHAPTER III

## THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

THE distinctive thing in Christianity is its doctrine of an incarnation of God for the purposes of redemption. This is an amazing concept, altogether beyond man's powers to discover, much less for him to happen upon by accident. That the Eternal Creator should gain a footing in this world of His own making, and in the form and nature of His creature, Man, should appear with man's redemption in view, is divinely wonderful even if considered only as an idea. That in the man Christ Jesus the divine nature was incarnate is an essential and fundamental element of the Christian faith. In the Apostle John's great phrase, 'The Word was made flesh.' Let the endeavour to exclude this vital fact from the Christian scheme succeed and little would remain worth preserving. Sir William Ramsay has well said, 'The result clearly demonstrated in the many attempts which have been made to cut out the superhuman and divine from the life of Jesus Christ as set forth in the Gospels, is that when you succeed in eliminating them, practically nothing remains.' The coming into our world of a Divine Person in humanity demands that His entry shall be in keeping with such a supernatural marvel, and the New Testament record of the unique birth of Jesus of a virgin mother fulfils this demand.

The Coming of Christ dominates Bible history. John the Baptist, the last of the prophets of the Law, epitomised the message of the Old Testament when he cried by the Jordan, 'There cometh One.' Old Testament genealogies

significantly point to the Advent of this Coming One. When we open the New Testament we find ourselves reading a genealogy not unlike those found in the Old Testament save that it is carried forward to its goal and end in Jesus Christ. He is the fulfilment of the hopes kindled by the prophetic promises. The generations stretching from Abraham, through David, down to the opening of our era were all in view of Him. Christ is the goal of history. Another genealogy meets us in the early part of Luke's Gospel (Luke 3. 23-38). It is unique among Bible genealogies in the fact that, instead of moving with the stream of time, it proceeds in the opposite direction, working backward from Jesus Christ as its starting point, through David and Abraham, to Adam and to God, in order to demonstrate that God's purpose in the creation itself looked towards Jesus Christ. Matthew's genealogy precedes the story of the birth, in keeping with the purpose of the writer to show that Jesus is the fulfilment of prophetic promise: Luke's genealogy, on the other hand, follows the story of the birth, in line with the thought that Jesus is the key to God's purpose in the creation of man.

These two evangelists, Matthew and Luke, are the principal witnesses to the truth of the Virgin Birth. Indeed, there are no others called; so that apart from their testimony we have no knowledge how Jesus came into the world. The Bible law concerning the sufficiency of witness is, 'The testimony of two men is true' (John 8. 17), and the reply to the objector who asks, 'Why are there no more than two witnesses to this story of how Jesus came into the world?' is: How often is it necessary to say a thing before it becomes true? Two quite dependable witnesses bear testimony which agrees in every material point. 'In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established' (Matt. 18. 16).

At this point it may be well to remark that the two

narratives are unshakeable as original and integral parts of the Gospels in which they appear. Dr. J. Weiss says: 'All the evidence is that there were never forms of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke without the infancy narratives.'

The reader of the two accounts (Matt. 1. 18-25 and Luke 1. 26-35) will at once notice that they are independent, corroborative and complementary. They differ in so many ways that it is clear they are the work of independent witnesses. Just as all efforts to make a completely satisfactory 'harmony' of the four Gospels have failed, so here with these two histories, there are characteristic divergencies which point to independent sources and which show each evangelist had his own viewpoint. But while this is so, it is also true that the two accounts coincide in every material particular: they corroborate each other. Both testify that the birth took place in the last days of Herod the Great, that the conception was by the Holy Spirit, that the mother was virgin, that Joseph to whom she was betrothed was of the line of David, that he was divinely apprised of the unique circumstances connected with Mary's condition, that he therefore assumed guardianship of her Babe, that the Child was pre-named Jesus and declared to be a Saviour, that the birth was attended by revelations and visions, that Bethlehem was the birthplace and that afterwards Joseph and Mary dwelt in Nazareth. Further, the two records supplement each other. Matthew narrates the history from Joseph's point of view. He tells of the shock Joseph experienced when he became aware of Mary's condition, of the action upon which he decided, of the Divine disclosure to him by dream of the wonderful cause of the event that was impending, of his consequent taking of Mary to wife and his subsequent role as guardian of her child. Mary has no place in the story except in her

relation to Joseph and as mother of the Babe to whom he stood legally as protector. Angelic messages are directed to him and in the events which follow—the flight into Egypt and the return to Nazareth—he takes the lead.

Just as clearly, Luke tells the story from Mary's point of view. Joseph comes into the narrative only as a person to whom Mary is betrothed. It is all about her. The story of Zachariah and Elisabeth leads up to the Annunciation, which is made to Mary. Her inspired response, the Magnificat, is recorded. Of the circumstances of the birth and the visit of the shepherds it is said of her that she kept them all and pondered them in her heart. The aged Simeon addresses his words to her. It is the story as only Mary could tell it.

Only Joseph and Mary knew all these intimate facts, and if the evangelical histories were obtained through information received (and the opening verses of Luke's Gospel look in that direction), one of them must have been the evangelist's informant. This would account for the circumstantiality and the chaste delicacy with which the record is set forth.

Why are the other New Testament writers silent about the Virgin Birth? Even though the requirement of the law of testimony is satisfied by the witness of the two evangelists, it is still a matter of enquiry why other New Testament writers are silent on so important a matter.

Why does Mark say nothing? Because he is concerned only with those facts which come within the orbit of apostolic testimony. His task is to set forth Jesus as the Perfect Servant of Jehovah. What does a servant want with a genealogy? Who is concerned about the circumstances of a bond-servant's birth? The question that matters with regard to a servant is, can he work? Therefore Mark plunges into the story of Jesus at His baptism by John, the beginning place of his public ministry. All



through his Gospel Mark is showing us the Lord Jesus as the indefatigable worker, and his last word is to tell us that even now at the right hand of God He is working with His heralds as they preach here, confirming the word with signs following (Mark 16. 20). Mark says nothing about the Virgin Birth because such testimony lies outside his purpose in writing.

And what of the other evangelist, John? John is concerned with our Lord's divine status. To set the Divine Sonship and the Messiahship of Jesus convincingly before his readers is his presiding purpose (John 20. 31). When he writes of the Incarnation he says, 'And the Word became flesh,' without specifying the mode. It is generally agreed that he wrote a good many years later than his three fellow-evangelists and that he avoided as far as possible repeating the use of their material. In all likelihood he was familiar with the contents of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Does he repudiate their testimony of the birth of Jesus? Mary had been placed under John's guardianship by the Lord by a charge spoken from the Cross itself. Could she have kept silent had there been anything to deny in what Matthew and Luke had written?

What of Paul? He relies on the death and resurrection of the Lord for his proofs of Christ's deity and Messiahship, rather than on the birth and life. Yet there is a studied circumspection, a careful choice of terms in such references as his epistles have of the birth of Jesus. For instance, in Gal. 4. 4 he writes, 'Made (*ginomai*—become) of a woman,' where the ordinary word *gennao*—born, might have been expected. Similarly in Phil. 2. 7 he writes, 'Made (*ginomai*—become) in the likeness of men.' And there is surely an echo of Luke 1. 35 in Rom. 1. 4 where the sinlessness of Jesus ('according to the spirit of holiness') argues His Deity even as does His resurrection ('by the resurrection of the dead'). And does not the Apostle's

argument about the federal headship of Christ in Rom. 5 imply a birth different from Adam's posterity?

It may safely be said that the testimony of Matthew and Luke to the Virgin Birth of our Lord is not challenged by any writer of the New Testament, and that, on the other hand, there are a number of instances which show these writers were aware of the facts witnessed and accepted them.

Since Christ is the centre of Bible history some indication of the manner of His birth may reasonably be looked for in the prophetic Scriptures. Matthew finds a reference in Isa. 7. 14 and quotes it in his account of the birth (Matt. 1. 23). He carries back the torch of his knowledge of Christ into this Old Testament oracle and reads the intention of the inspiring Spirit to show the perpetuity of David's line as secured through the Virgin's Son. It is objected that the Hebrew word *almah* does not contain the full meaning of our word '*virgin*' but denotes a young person of marriageable age. This is so. It remains true nevertheless that in the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Scriptures from which the Lord Jesus constantly quoted and from which the New Testament writers so largely quote the word is translated '*virgin*'. Luther challenged Jew or Christian to prove that in any passage of Scripture *almah* means a married woman, promising the finder a hundred florins reward, though, said he in his rough-tongued way, 'God alone knows where I may find the money.' The point is not what Isaiah meant by what he wrote, but what the Spirit of Christ which was in him pointed to when it led him to write, 'Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel.' Whatever partial and contemporary fulfilment the words may have received their ultimate meaning and fulfilment were seen at Bethlehem.

The language of some other prophetic Scriptures is

also carefully wrought in view of the unique birth of the Saviour. It is not for nothing that the word that stands at the head of the stream of prophecy should speak of *the woman's seed* (Gen. 3. 15): that Isaiah should foretell 'a child born' as well as 'a son given' (Isa. 9. 6): that Micah in telling of Bethlehem as the appointed place of the Nativity should put it thus, 'Out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting,' these latter words showing that when so unparalleled a thing as 'God manifest in the flesh' was involved it was congruous that an unique procedure should be employed to encompass such a wonder. And unique wonder it assuredly was, for the birth was not, as in ordinary births, the creation of a new personality, but rather a Divine Person entering on a new mode of existence. It was a new and unprecedented 'going forth' of One whose goings forth had been from of old, from everlasting. This demanded the miracle expressed in the carefully chosen language of Luke 1. 35, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called Son of God.'

The cavil against miracle should be dismissed. The plea that miracle is impossible begs the whole question. Given an efficient cause, a sufficient purpose and a credible record there is no valid reason to deny miracle. Miracle is God at work by means with which we are unfamiliar, either suspending natural law (His accustomed mode of working) or using some higher law to effect the end in view. Here is an event which, itself unparalleled, is brought about by what are to us supernatural means. Yet all is congruous with the singular greatness of the end in view and with all else that characteristically marks the pathway of the Son of God from His premundane con-

ditions of glory by way of Bethlehem's stoop, the lowly Life of Obedience, the Death on the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension up to where He was before.

The last sight men had of Him was when a group of them, sane, wideawake, matter-of-fact men saw Him go. With their eyes fixed upon Him they together witnessed His going: they saw Him rise from their midst up into the blue, higher and higher; till a cloud received Him out of their sight and they saw Him no more. His going was a miracle. Is it out of keeping that His arrival should have been also miraculous?

Indeed, every great stage of that marvellous journey was stamped by the supernatural. The Resurrection was the central miracle, the irrefragable evidence of His deity, His victory over death, the efficacy of His sacrifice and the vindication of His character and claims. His death was a miracle. Death had no claim on Him, it had established no rights in Him: He was the Prince of life. Life was fountained in Him. Yet He died by a voluntary act. He laid down what no one could take from Him—His life. The death of the Cross was the one altogether voluntary death that has taken place in history. 'He bowed his head and dismissed his spirit.' The works He wrought during the years of His public ministry were stamped with the mark of the miraculous. 'Many good works have I showed you from my Father,' He said of them. They were works such as no other man ever did, deeds of power, of grace, deliverance and mercy. His teaching was different from that of all who have ever undertaken to instruct their fellows. It has the signature of God upon it. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall never pass away.' What a claim! What a miracle if it should prove true! And the passing of nineteen centuries has only served to verify it. Teaching that is permanent, final and true with not the slightest admixture of error.

His sinlessness abides the most astonishing thing about Him. Of all the days He lived (and there were over twelve thousand of them) there was not one in which for so much as a moment He touched a level lower than absolute moral perfection. No nightfall found Him with anything to regret, withdraw, amend or confess. Absolute sinlessness was the unvarying level at which He walked. Miracle!

Therefore we submit it suitable that He whose path was thus marked by the supernatural and the miraculous in all its stages should come into manhood by a mode bearing the same identifying seal.

It has been remarked that denial of the Virgin Birth nearly always goes with denial of the virgin life of Christ. 'Few,' says another, 'who reject the Virgin Birth take in other respects an adequate view of Christ's Person and work.' Dr. Alexander McLaren puts it pungently thus: 'In the New Testament the great mystery on which the Christian revelation depends is declared in the fewest and simplest words. That He who is to show God to men and to save them from their sins must be born of a woman, is plainly necessary. That He must be free from the taint in nature which without exception has passed down to all who are "born of the will of the flesh" is no less plainly requisite. Both requirements are met in the supernatural birth of Jesus: and unless both have been met He cannot be the Saviour of the world. Nor is that supernatural birth less needful to explain His sinlessness than it is to qualify Him for His unique office. How came He to be free from the flaws which are found in all others? Surely if, after millions of links in the chain, which have all been of mingled metal, there comes one of pure gold, it cannot have had the same origin as the others. It is part of the chain—"the Word became flesh"—but it has been cast and moulded in another forge—"that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost".'

In sub-apostolic times the doctrine of Christ was menaced in two opposite directions. There was the heresy of the Ebionites, according to which Jesus was to be placed in the human category and regarded as a Spirit-led man or prophet with the status of an Old Testament man of God such as say, Moses or Elijah. This view robbed Him of the glory of Deity. Then there was the Gnostic error, by which He was interpreted as a Divine Person, but His human experience was reduced to a mere phantasm, a semblance, a temporary union with the Logos. This deprived Him of the reality of His humanity.

The Virgin Birth resists both these errors effectively. It asserts a true connection with our race by a real birth; yet on the other hand, it asserts an exceptional birth, setting Him apart as one whose entry into the world was due to a new creative contact of God with humanity. The fact of the Virgin Birth stands guard at the doorway of the Faith over the central truth of the Person of Christ, holding Him forth in the words of the Westminster Confession, 'True God, True Man, One Christ.'

## CHAPTER IV

### GREAT DAVID'S GREATER SON

THE first title our Lord wears in the New Testament, in the opening verse of Matthew 1, is 'The Son of David.' 'The generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.' And the first title that is accorded to David is 'King.' 'Jesse begat David the King, and David the King begat Solomon.'

#### I DAVID THE KING

The Holy Spirit is careful to note that David is linked with Christ according to the flesh, that He is our Lord's ancestor. Our Lord comes of the line and family of David, and as such all the glories pertaining to the kingdom which is the burden of Old Testament prophecy are rightly our Lord's. For as we read down this first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, and mark the footsteps of the generations, our eye lights upon the great Name of Jesus, Who comes not to save Israel from the Philistines, but to save His people from their sins. Before we have gone much further we light upon this also: Men from the East enquiring in the streets of David's capital, saying, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' Our Lord is the Son of David. He is in the direct and clear line of the Davidic succession, and as such is born a King. The throne of David is rightly His, and with it the throne and Empire of the World.

David Baron, in one of his books, says that 'our Lord is the very last whose descent from David could be established by sufficiently authentic proof. At the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple the Jewish

genealogical records were destroyed, so that our Lord's genealogy as descendant of David is the very last demonstrable.'

It is clear from the Scriptures that Messiah must needs establish the fact that He is the son of David. This title was generally conceded to our Lord. In the Gospel of Matthew there are blind men who ask a boon of Him in these terms: 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us.' There is a Gentile woman from Syro-Phoenicia who seeks a blessing at His hands in identical terms. In the 15th chapter the whole populace ask, 'Is not this the Christ, the Son of David?'

In the 21st chapter our Lord lays formal claim to David's throne. For he deliberately fulfils in the most literal fashion Old Testament words well known to the Jewish people. 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Behold, thy King cometh, lowly and sitting upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass.' And as He rode, the people acclaimed Him, saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' The very children sang His praises in these words, and when some bade them be silent, our Lord replied in the very words of David, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise.' We perfect praise when we give Christ His due. It does not need a head full of Scripture knowledge, or a heart bursting with visionary ecstasies to give perfect praise, but when with the simplicity of children we give to Christ that which is rightly His, we perfect praise.

His enemies might have contested His claim to be the Son of David; no doubt they were ready enough, but none of them seems to have attempted to do so. Later, the apostles were abused and imprisoned for preaching the gospel, but none was ever arraigned before a judge for telling lies in announcing that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the Son of David.



Remember, this was important, a truth to be confessed in the gospel. The gospel of God differs from philosophies and systems airy, mythical, and nebulous, which men have coined and foisted upon the human race. These cannot by any means be pinned down to reality and definiteness, and to get at their meaning is like trying to catch vapour with a fork. But the gospel of God has its roots in human history. 'Remember Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, raised from the dead according to my gospel,' said Paul to Timothy. Christ, who is the sum of the message we preach, is really Man. He has a real human lineage, and the story upon which the gospel is based is a story that has historical reality. Therefore, when Paul sat down to pen the profoundest treatise extant, the inspired explanation of the gospel, the Epistle to the Romans, he defined his gospel in these very terms: 'The gospel of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead.'

Yonder in Heaven our Lord does not disdain to wear still that same title. When John looked and saw the Lamb in the midst of the throne, he knew that he had the best authority for believing that that Lamb was identical with One whose title is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah; and in the very last message that the Bible holds from our Lord to His Church, He says, 'I am the root and offspring of David' (Rev. 22. 16).

## II DAVID AS PROPHET

Not only is David before us in the New Testament as a king, but also as a prophet. When we recollect how busy and how eventful a life David's was, it is surprising how little there is in the New Testament about what David

did. There is far more about what he said and wrote. He is of importance to us as a prophet, because as Peter said on the day of Pentecost, 'David speaketh concerning him.' David is linked with Christ in that he is one of the prophets who testified beforehand of His sufferings and of His glory. And the words that David was led of the Spirit of God to write in his Psalms are words that were much employed by the first preachers of the Gospel in seeking to bring the claims of Christ before their hearers.

David testified about the path of Christ. Peter says, 'David speaketh concerning him, I set the Lord always before my face' (Psa. 16). Here is a testimony about the sinless walk of our Lord. Adam was set here in a fair scene in innocency, but he failed to set the Lord always before his face. He fell and involved us all in ruin. The Lord Jesus came into a scene spoiled and marred by sin, but He set the Lord always before Him. Nothing was done by Him without reference to God, and in consequence He always had the Lord beside Him. 'He is at my right hand, that I should not be moved.' David's testimony is that our Lord lived and walked, step by step abreast with God. Never before Him, never behind Him; in a deep, sweet, unbroken fellowship against which waves of temptation from without dashed in vain, so that He was 'not moved.'

In that path He found deep joy. 'Therefore my heart is glad. And my tongue rejoiceth.' Again it is the 16th Psalm. There is no joy so deep, no peace so tranquil, as that which holds the heart of him who walks in fellowship with God. So when presently our Lord stood face to face with the darkness of death, this was His confidence. 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.' David, when he so spoke, says Peter, did not write about himself. These words of the 16th Psalm went far beyond any experience

David ever had. There is a sepulchre not far from Jerusalem where lie the dust and bones of David even now; but there is, too, a sepulchre in a garden yonder, and he who looks therein finds it empty. 'He whom God raised from the dead saw no corruption' (Acts 13. 37).

David witnessed about the path of Christ, His perfect walk, His death, and His resurrection. In the 110th Psalm he witnessed concerning the exaltation of Christ. 'Jehovah', said David, 'saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.' Peter argues in the same way that David could not be writing about himself, for he addresses as his Lord the One about whom he writes.

Our Lord Himself quotes David and points out that he was a prophet who bore witness to the Person of Christ. There was a day when our Lord, after answering many questions, Himself put a question. 'What do you think of Messiah? Whose Son is he?' Every Jewish boy knew that. It was easy, and they answered immediately, 'the Son of David.' 'But,' saith our Lord, 'David says by the Spirit, that in a conversation on high he overheard Jehovah saying unto his Lord, Sit on my right hand. You say he is David's Son. David calls him his Lord.' How do you understand that riddle? His Son, with all the ideas of subordination that reside in that word. His Lord, with all the ideas of superiority that word conveys. How are the two things true at one and the same time? That was beyond their theology. He of whom David wrote not only came according to the flesh of the line of David, but He was David's Lord. Not man only, but God.

As a prophet David bore witness to the power of Christ. That was a wonderful open-air meeting in the 4th of Acts. It must have been an open-air meeting, because I cannot conceive the leader of that meeting beginning as he did if he had a roof above his head. 'Lord, thou art

God which made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is.'

Peter and John had just been released from prison, and as they come to their company, and they go to prayer, the first word that breaks from the lips of the one who leads is this word 'Lord.'

It is the unusual word we have anglicised as despot, sovereign, ruler. The prayer goes on to quote David's Second Psalm, to show the faith of these men. Nations might rage, and potentates might oppose, and governments might persecute, but they could only do whatsoever God before appointed should be done. The Lord they served was the Sovereign Ruler, with the course of all history in His hands. Therefore calmly they prayed, not to be delivered from those who persecuted, or that those who persecuted should be broken in pieces as a potter's vessel, but they prayed only that they might have grace to open their mouths boldly, and bear testimony, come what may.

### III DAVID AS MAN

We regard David the King with admiration, and at a respectful distance. We think of David the prophet with something of awe, remembering the dignity of that office. But David was also a man, a real man, a man of like passions as we are; a man who had real experience of God. In the New Testament quite a good deal is said about David as a living, breathing man, who had to do with God.

Roughly the New Testament can be divided into two portions—the four Gospels and the Acts being the historical part, and the Epistles and the Revelation the doctrinal part. The first two Old Testament men who are named in the first of these divisions are Abraham and David. When the second part begins, at the Epistle to the Romans, these two men are again before us. But

not now in order that their earthly lineage so far as it is connected with Christ shall be set forth, but in order to show the grounds upon which they each had dealings with God.

The first word in the Bible about David, is this, spoken by Samuel to Saul at the very moment when Saul was rejected, and long before the name of David actually appears, 'God has found a man after his own heart, who shall fulfil all his will.' Then chapters come and go, and at last the youth David appears. And then the long story of David's life. Now we well know that David's life was not clear of blemish, that his sad failures are faithfully included in the Old Testament history. There are nearly fifty references to David in the New Testament, but there is not one that mentions how he behaved in Gath before Achish, when he feigned madness and changed his behaviour for fear of the Philistines, and the day when he said, 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.' The New Testament passes over that. Not one word of that black and awful matter of Uriah the Hittite and Bathsheba his wife is repeated in the New Testament. The weakness in his own house by which he failed to deal with Amnon first, and Absalom next. There is none of that in the New Testament. Nor his pride in numbering the people, nor those vengeful words uttered even on his deathbed against Shimei and Joab. The New Testament is silent about these. Instead, the New Testament says again what God said about David before any of these things were done. 'A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART.' For David was a forgiven man, and God's forgiveness includes an act of oblivion of all transgression.

And when he had filled to the full the measure of his appointed service, we are told, 'he fell asleep,' a tender figure of the labourer who, having done his day's work, lies down and falls into tranquil rest.

## CHAPTER V

### CHRIST—GREATER THAN SOLOMON

#### GREATER IN WISDOM, A GREATER KING, A GREATER BUILDER

OUR Lord Jesus spoke of Solomon: of his outward magnificence, the gleam of his much wrought gold, the smooth whiteness of his ivory palaces, the rich apparel of his servants, his towers that shimmered in the sun, the gifts from afar brought by those who did him honour, his chambers scented with the spices of India, his multitude of chariots and horses and all the pomp and splendour of his court; our Lord included it all in His phrase: 'Solomon in all his glory' (Matt. 6. 29).

Having looked upon this glory, our Lord asked his hearers to look at the wild lily of the Palestinian wayside, and to learn that its glory outdid that of Solomon. 'I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' For, unlike the glory of Solomon put upon him from without, the beauty and fragrance of the lily of the field are part of itself; they are the expression of its life and nature; they unfold and exhale from within. And for their manifestation the carefree plant but lets its roots suck up the moist strength of the earth in which God set it, spreads out its leaves to breathe the sweet air that is always around it, drinks in the sunshine by day and trustfully folds up its petals by night. As though to say to the man with ears to hear: We can wear neither comeliness nor strength to His praise, save as we live in simplicity of faith in Him.

Again, at a later time, the name of Solomon was heard

on the lips of the Lord Jesus. This time it was the wisdom of Solomon that was in view. The eager purpose, the swift decision, the arduous journey which were the response of the Queen of the South to the report of Solomon's wisdom and greatness are commended by the Lord. 'She came from far to hear' (Matt. 12. 41). He contrasts the sign-seeking unbelief of that generation which cavilled at His words, and warns that Sheba's Queen shall witness against them in the day of reckoning. And then He compares Himself with Solomon, saying: 'A greater than Solomon is here' (Matt. 12. 42).

Only one chapter back, and the Lord was saying 'I am meek and lowly in heart' (Matt. 11. 29); whereas in this chapter He thrice refers to His own greatness. Wonder is that in His mouth there is no incongruity in these widely dissimilar claims. Such is He that He speaks of His greatness without despite to His lowliness, and of His lowliness without loss to His greatness! 'GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE' (v. 6). 'GREATER THAN JONAH' (v. 41), 'GREATER THAN SOLOMON' (v. 42).

Greater than the Temple, for He was the Shrine of Deity in a sense deeper than could ever be true of any material building. He was the true meeting-place of God and man—the Place of Sacrifice—the Home of the Veiled Glory—'One greater than the temple is here'.

Greater than Jonah, also, for He was supremely God's Prophet of mercy—Mystic Dweller for three days and nights in the heart of the earth—One whom that underworld could not hold, but who came up thence into the land of light and victory—Bearer of God's message to the Gentiles—'A greater than Jonah is here.'

Greater than Solomon, also: He surpasses Solomon, for He is Wisdom Incarnate—King All-glorious—Prince of Peace—Builder of God's true Temple of redeemed man—'A greater than Solomon is here.'

## I GREATER THAN SOLOMON IN WISDOM

Solomon, we are told, spake three thousand proverbs. Now a proverb is concealed wisdom. It is truth framed in words fit and few. 'As apples of gold in filigree work of silver,' so is a proverb: golden fruit of truth set in a shining tracery of apt words. To hear King Solomon utter proverbs men came from the ends of the earth. 'All the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart' (1 Kings 10. 24).

Unlike our poor selves, he had a special and Divine endowment of wisdom; whereas common folks at best obtain it only on the instalment system, and very many, with all their getting never get wisdom at all. Solomon received a full measure of it by God's grace in the pure days of his youth. 'Ask what I shall give thee,' the voice of God said to him one night as he lay awake at Gibeon. And because already that fear of the Lord which itself is the beginning of wisdom was in him, he asked for himself, not length of days, or wealth, or perpetual triumph over his foes, but wisdom.

What is wisdom? It is that power of mind and heart which penetrates to the soul of a matter, which pierces through the shell of things to the kernel, which storms the out-works and takes the citadel, and which is not occupied with the outward seeming of any subject, but with its core of inward reality. It is moral insight.

But it is more. Wisdom is the power to act upon the mind's true judgment of things. It is the capacity to apply the truth discerned to the actual situation of life. It is in this power to co-ordinate judgment and decision, discernment and direction, understanding and application that wisdom lies. 'The price of wisdom is above rubies' (Job 28. 18), so that, all his other fabulous wealth notwithstanding, Solomon's chief treasure was this Divine gift. Yet he stands in his own place in the lesson-gallery



of the Word of God to make plain to every one with eyes to see that no gift, however splendid, no endowment however brilliant, is itself a safeguard against moral shipwreck or a guarantee of spiritual excellence.

Three thousand proverbs, in which the excellencies of wisdom are described in richly-glowing detail, and the ugliness of folly depicted with equal power and vividness, and then the wise man who spake them all becomes a fool at his latter end!

For, nothing that is merely ours and not us, nothing that is given to us or put upon us, no talent however rare, no mental qualities however shining, are a sure guard in the moral stress of such a world as ours. Not the gifts of God Himself can keep us, apart from the attitude of meek dependence upon Him. This alone is man's safety; this alone keeps him in the place ordained for his blessedness—the place of trust in the Living God. Only as man stays, hour by hour, in this sure refuge do his gifts begin to become his own. When he dwells in God, God's gifts become woven into the very substance of his soul, part of himself.

Now our Lord Jesus not only uttered wisdom, He was Wisdom Incarnate, the very wisdom of God. What He taught He wrought. What He preached He practised before He set it before others. Between His deeds and His words no disparity can be found. There is no comparison between Himself and Solomon as to wisdom: there is only contrast.

Solomon taught truth but failed to practise. Christ lived all His precepts both before he taught them and afterwards also. He not only spake truth, He was, He is the truth. In Him there is complete moral correspondence to God—the God of Truth. Solomon uttered wisdom but descended to the daily commission of folly. Deed and word in our holy Lord utter the self-same message.

## II A GREATER KING THAN SOLOMON

The kingship of Solomon was one of glory and peace. In these respects Solomon as King is a type of that glorious Person whose Name from of old is Prince of Peace, and that era of opulence and earthly magnificence a foreshadowing of the wealth and splendour of Messiah's Coming reign. Gold in abundance, silver common as the stones of the street, the subjugation of all enemies round about, homage from the kings of the earth and security for all his subjects—these are some of the ways in which Solomon's kingdom fitly pre-pictured that grander Kingdom for whose establishment and world-wide sway the disciples of the Lord were taught to pray.

But in other ways it failed to depict Christ's Kingdom. The very magnificence of his palace, his court, the lavishness of his hospitality, and the prodigality of his administration laid heavy burdens on his subjects. Speaking of the burdensomeness of the custom and tribute levied in order to maintain all that vast display, Solomon's son and successor, Rehoboam, afterwards said to the people, 'My father chastised you with whips.' In that magnificent Psalm of Messiah's glory, which is said to be the work of Solomon, the 72nd, the ideal King is set forth as full of solicitude for the common people: 'He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper.' The 'masses' will not be to him what they have too long been in the eyes of ambitious potentates striving for world-dominion, 'cannon fodder,' but contrawise, 'precious shall their blood be in his sight.'

How short-lived was Solomon's kingdom! Its day was already waning before his life-span had been measured; its unity was ended in the days of his foolish son, and its divided portions then progressively weakened and worsened until neither kingdom, throne, nor government

remained, and until rule passed into the hands of heathen powers.

But of Him that was 'Greater than Solomon,' it is written, 'Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end' (Isa. 9. 7), and again, 'a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . or left to other people, but it shall break in picces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand for ever' (Dan. 2. 44).

Founded on righteousness, overflowing with plenty, filled with peace, governed with equity, abiding in strength, blessing all peoples, in that day there shall be one Lord and His name one, for the Lord shall be King in all the earth. Let the sad earth soon hail her jubilee, and let the happy nations, none daring to make them afraid, say, 'A greater than Solomon is here.'

### III A GREATER BUILDER THAN SOLOMON

Solomon was the builder of the Temple. Not till peace everywhere prevailed did its construction begin. David, warrior-king, amassed by his conquests the substance, but to build was not granted to him by God. Peace through conquest must first be made, and only to a man of peace could the work of building the House of the Lord be committed. The plan was made known to David, the actual erection devolved upon Solomon. The material was prepared beforehand by David, the incorporation of it into the structure of the House committed to Solomon. David, we may say, found the price; Solomon brought the substance won into the beauteous pattern decreed by God. No temple without David's victories. No Temple without Solomon's wise and patient labours.

Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfils the typical parts of both David and Solomon as God's Temple-builder. He is 'the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle'

(Psa. 24. 8), to whom the everlasting doors of highest Heaven lift up their heads as He returns from His conquest at Calvary. Seated on the Father's throne, King of Righteousness and King of Peace, He sent forth the Holy Spirit, His Viceregent in the earth, through whom He is building the true Temple—the Church. From Pentecost until now He has continued this work of building:

View the vast building, see it rise,  
The work how great, the plan how wise.

Solomon wrought in goodly stones, in gold, silver, and in carven cedarwork. Christ works in priceless souls, in the imperishable material of human personalities. Solomon prepared his work without and then built it into the fabric of the House (Prov. 24. 27). Stones were quarried, shaped, and beautified by workmen who wrought each upon his own particular part, and in localities far distant from Moriah.

So, through many generations Christ's workmen have toiled in far-apart places. They have quarried souls of men. These 'living stones', prepared aforehand by the sovereign operations of the Holy Spirit of God, have been 'set' by Him each in its own place. In Solomon's days the prepared stones were brought from their native distance and silently set, each in the appointed position. 'There was no sound of hammer or tool heard while the Temple was in building' (1 Kings 6. 7). So also, the living stones of God's spiritual house, without demonstration or public clamour, but with that silent power that marks the handiwork of God, are being fitly framed together, so that the whole 'groweth into an holy temple in the Lord.'

Solomon's shiny pinnacles have fallen, his massive walls have been overthrown. The sad day came when his 'exceeding magnificent' temple fell before the onslaughts

of the Babylonian armies. 'Our holy and beautiful house,' lamented Israel, 'is fallen down' (Isa. 64. 11). Not one stone has remained of it for many centuries now, but Christ's Temple will never fall. The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. Solomon built for Time; Christ builds for Eternity. Solomon for earth; Christ for Heaven. Behold! a greater builder than Solomon is here.

#### IV GREATER THAN SOLOMON IN GROWING FAME

It was the report of the fame of Solomon that brought the Queen of Sheba from her far-off domain, for the fame of Solomon ran through the nations like fire through straw. The high-lights of that fame were his wisdom, wealth, and power. To hear his wisdom and to look upon the rich and beautiful things with which he had surrounded himself, drew her, as it must have drawn many, from afar to Jerusalem.

The echo of that fame still sounds faintly in men's ears. It is still a proverb among them. But its grandeur has faded. Its lustre has gone. It has died down until a mere whisper is occasionally heard of it, a whisper which bespeaks an ancient thing whose day is done, a tale that is told, a landmark almost obscured by the gathering mists of time. But the fame of Jesus grows and spreads. It gathers power with the passing years. His Name is daily on a million tongues. No hour of the world's day or night but He is extolled and worshipped. Though the time of His world-wide acceptance has not yet come, there are to-day millions who serve Him as they would serve no other, love Him as they love none else, and whose master-aim is to make Him known to those who live in ignorance of His renown.

No conquering warrior has any victory to compare with His Cross. No sage has words so pondered and cherished as His. No king commands the allegiance of so

vast a host of willing subjects. Yea, the words of the Queen of the South are to-day far, far truer of the Lord Jesus Christ than ever they were true of Solomon. 'It was a true report that I heard . . . of thy acts and of thy wisdom . . . behold the half was not told me' (1 Kings 10.6).

On from glory to glory, from strength to strength, from power to power shall His repute increase. Till His is the universally celebrated Name of names, and till (to the Father's praise) every knee bows and every tongue owns Him as the Supreme and Only Lord, greater than the greatest man who ever lived.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OBEDIENT TONGUE

Isaiah 42. 2; 49. 2; 50. 4; 53. 7

THE passages from which the first and fourth of these texts are taken are introduced by the same phrase: 'Behold my Servant': they begin with the voice of God calling man's attention to Christ, as though He would turn our thoughts and attention away from every other subject, and say to us: 'See the ideal servant. Look at Him who served perfectly. Gaze at Him, the example of perfect service; and, cleansed by His atoning blood, quickened into new life, and made My children, go forth in your turn to serve after the same pattern.'

The passages from which the other two texts are taken are written in the first person. It is our Lord Jesus Christ who is speaking about Himself. He calls men's attention to certain great facts about Himself. He begins: 'Listen, O isles, unto me' and 'The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned.' Each of these words tells us something about our Lord's speech. Our speech as Christians is such an important part of our life, and upon it depends so largely the influence we wield, that I do not think it can be without helpfulness for us to look at the speech of Him who spake as never man spake.

Will you therefore look at the first of these four scriptures, chapter forty-two, verse two: 'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.' The twelfth of Matthew explains the fulfilment of this prophecy. Matthew recognised his Lord after he had watched Him in one day of His labour for God. He had

seen his Master doing many wonderful miracles, and heard Him charge the folks that they should not make Him known. Immediately he thought of this picture in Isaiah, and saw in his Lord's activities that day, a fulfilment of this ancient prophecy, that when Jehovah's perfect servant came amongst men His speech would be characterised by a graciousness, a gentleness, an absence of all self-advertisement, by the fact that always His speech should be such as rather called attention to His great mission in the world. He shall not cry, He shall not strive, He shall not wrangle. There is to be nothing loud, nothing strident, about our Lord; but instead, there will be that gentleness and that becomingness, which immediately proclaims that His care is to do Another's will, and not His own.

Now is not this something that we ourselves might well imitate? What a need there is, dear brethren, for gentleness amongst the children of God. One of the very first qualifications of the model pastor is that he should be gentle amongst the young children of God, as a nurse cherisheth her children. I remember lying in hospital a few years back, and there was a nurse there who filled me with fear every time she came near my bed. She would have made an excellent navvy, but for the accident of sex. But she was evidently not intended for a nurse, for she certainly did treat the poor fellows roughly. What a need there is, in dealing with each other, to remember the grace of gentleness. The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness. 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench.' With matchless tenderness He will deal with the things that tend to fall and flicker into darkness. That was how our Lord, the perfect servant of Jehovah, walked in the midst of men. Therefore, when He stood up in His own city, in the last place where men were disposed to take Him seriously, they



wondered at the charming words that fell from His lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. It is so easy, with a harsh and ungentle word, to do damage to a life that will not be repaired in years. There was a twisted tree in the garden, and the little fellow said: 'Someone must have trodden on it when it was little, Daddy.' Oh, that we had the tongue that is taught of God, as was the tongue of the Lord, the tongue that was not loud and strident and harsh. Not the tongue of one who wrangled and disputed, but the tongue of one of whom we sing:

'Ages have passed since at Thy word  
Men marvelled as they heard;  
And still our hearts within us burn,  
When listening to Thy word.'

Now in chapter forty-nine there is quite a different quality in our Lord's speech. Verse two: 'He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me.' These figures of the arrow carefully polished, hid in the quiver, are eloquent of the completeness of the abandonment of our Lord to His Father's will. We can think of nothing more passive than the arrow put in the quiver until the exact moment when he who bears the quiver shall lay his hand on the arrow, and speed it on its flight. That was exactly our Lord's attitude. Because His speech was given Him from above, it was clothed with power. 'He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword.' My words are effective, like a sharp sword, piercing, cutting. The word of the Lord is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. The words of Christ had in them that divine quality that dealt with the conscience of man, that dragged men's secret sins out into the light of God's presence. And ringing through the ages, from the moment they fell from His lips until this present hour, there are no words

that can equal in power the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There was a lad called Samuel who lived long ago, about whom this remarkable thing is said: that the Lord was with Samuel, and let none of his words fall to the ground. And because the Lord was with him, his words were full of power. They were not like water spilt on the ground, but they sped upon their flight, and were not forgotten. Oh, brethren, in a day like this, when we are almost buried under deluges of words, how we need to covet the word that is effective because it is spoken in accordance with God's will. May we be as completely in the hand of the Lord as was our blessed Example Himself, so that our words may accomplish realities for God.

In the third of these scriptures, we are let a little deeper into the inner secrets of our Lord's life. There are no scriptures that are so enthralling in interest as those in which our Lord speaks about Himself, no subject that so captures the heart and mind of the Christian, as to be allowed to look for a while upon the inner springs of our Lord's life. Such a scripture is the one before us. 'The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned—the tongue of him that is taught—that I should be able to succour the weary with words.' There is a definition of the learned tongue. A tongue that has been taught of God has the capacity to succour the weary with words. Our Lord had that capacity in unmatched fulness.

'No lips like Thine, most blessed Lord,  
None ever spake like Thee;  
As sweet as honey—or as myrrh—  
Flows fragrant from the tree.'

How was it? This same scripture tells me that the school in which the learned tongue is bestowed is the school of the open ear. 'The Lord God hath opened mine ear,' and always the open ear precedes the learned tongue, and no tongue will ever be able to succour the weary with

words unless its possessor has opened his ear to the voice of God. There is no easy road to this learning. Morning by morning He was roused up to listen, and every day brought its direction and its lesson, and every hour brought its own tuition; until, after ten thousand mornings had come and gone, and He began to be about thirty years of age, He opened His mouth, and He knew where to open the Word of God, for He had found Himself in these very scriptures of Isaiah; and reading a chapter a little later than those we have been reading tonight, He could say: 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.' How is it, dear friends, that our tongues are so ignorant of the way to succour the weary with words? Is it because we open our ears so little to the voice of God? Is it because we are such unruly and inattentive scholars in the school of God? If we do not hearken, we cannot learn. If we do not learn, we cannot have the tongue of the learned. Because our Lord Jesus Christ was the One of perfect obedience, because every avenue that led to heart and mind, soul and will, was abandoned to God, therefore His tongue was a fountain of life.

Then there is this last passage, the fifty-third of Isaiah, so familiar to us all. We are beginning at verse seven, the third of five stanzas in this great prophecy. God speaks the first one, from verse thirteen to verse fifteen of chapter fifty-two. Then a saved people speak the next, from verse one to verse six of chapter fifty-three. Then again the voice of God begins to speak about His perfect servant, and this is how He speaks: 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.' That, dear friends, is the last lesson that the tongue ever learns, to be silent under wrong. This rises, in my thought, higher than any of the previous three: the Lord Himself, in the midst of the greatest and most glaring injustice that the ages have ever seen, perpetrated against

Himself, remains silent. Half a dozen times in the New Testament the word for 'answer' is used in a way which indicates that it means the setting up of a defence. On four of those six occasions the word is used in connection with our Lord's silence in the presence of Pilate. 'But Jesus gave him no answer.' He put in no defence. He declined to defend Himself. His tongue had been so taught of God, that in that supreme hour of suffering, His tongue was perfectly under His control. James says that the perfect man is the man who can bridle his tongue. Here our Lord answers perfectly to that description. All through the Old Testament we find that when men suffer they are not silent, but they become articulate, and when they suffer under wrong they sometimes become even vociferous. When men suffer, I notice, they become articulate with one of two voices. They either speak as those who are conscious of guilt, or they speak as those who are beset with doubt and perplexity. In Psalm fifty-one you have a man suffering, but all the while he is conscious of guilt. This suffering has come upon him, and he knows the reason for it, and he is breaking silence in a great outpouring of repentance. But when Job, suffering under the hand of God, and Jeremiah also, speak, what is the undertone in their cry? Perplexity as to what is God's intention, God's meaning. They cannot interpret God's ways. They are almost in doubt about God. But our Lord had no guilt to confess, and He had no doubts of God. 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.' Here is one who knows that it is God's will that He shall suffer, and His soul is perfectly at home in the will of God. This is the silence of obedience to the will of God.

When we bring our tongues to this test, we need to

hang our heads for very shame. When we look at this fourfold description of the speech of our Lord, and see how it ascends from height to height, until it reaches its crown in His beautiful and meek silence under the shadow of the Cross, how it rebukes all the much speech with which we fill the air. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, and for every idle word that men shall speak, account shall yet be given. If we would serve the Lord Christ after the pattern of our Master, then we need to have our tongues taught of God, made learned, because we lend our ears to the voice of God; so that our speech shall bring grace to them that hear, and so that it shall bind up the wounds of those that are ready to fall by the way, so that we shall be able to succour the weary with words, and so that beneath suffering and misunderstanding we shall be able to commit our way unto the Lord, rather than stand up and defend ourselves.

The power of speech, in a Christian, is a great privilege. It is also a tremendous responsibility, and we need to follow the pattern that is set before us in such scriptures as these. What a blessing to be able to look back without regrets for words that have wounded, and that we fain would withdraw. So may we press on our way, following Him of whom it is written: 'When he was reviled, he reviled not again. When he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.'

## CHAPTER VII

### TIMES AND SEASONS IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

THINGS small in themselves may yet indicate great matters. In David's days the rustle of mulberry leaves was the presage of coming victory; in Elijah's a tiny cloud as a man's hand held promise of abundance of rain after waterless years. A street-puddle may reflect the glory of the midday sun, a trifling circumstance may point out the character of a moment of destiny. Behind the shadow of some small occurrence by him who has the seer's power of vision may be detected the substance of immense spiritual realities.

John the Apostle had this gift of spiritual vision. He was a seer. He discerned a significance in passing circumstances which was not apparent to others and penetrated deeper into the spiritual substance of things than any of his fellow-apostles. There are numerous touches in his Gospel which evidence this acute spiritual perceptiveness; casual allusions seemingly whose real content is to be appreciated only by the reader who weighs every word persuaded that nothing in Holy Scripture is without purpose.

There are for instance some brief descriptive phrases here and there in his narration of events which on the surface are not more than observations about the weather, or the time of day, but which on reflection are seen to be indicators of the real character of the hour then present.

In John 10. 22, he writes: 'And it was at Jerusalem the Feast of the Dedication, and it was winter.'

He is about to tell of the Lord's fourth presentation of Himself to the nation in the capital at feast-time. The opposition of the people's leaders was hardening. On this occasion it was to show itself in a more menacing light than ever before, even to the threat of stoning. His reception was colder, more distant and chilling; the prospect was bare and unpromising, the outlook devoid of one green shoot of hope. The spiritual was reflected by the physical—'IT WAS WINTER.'

Again (ch. 13. 30), John is recording the going out of the traitor from the upper room. He does so in words graphic, though unadorned: 'He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.'

It is almost possible to see how John, watching the retreating figure, caught, just for that fraction of a second in which the door swung-to behind Iscariot, a glimpse of the black pall of the outer night which swallowed him up. He was gone, never to return. He had finally turned his back upon the Light; the night had received him, the outer darkness, symbol of the awful blackness into which he consigns his soul who deliberately sells Christ. 'IT WAS NIGHT.'

Yet again, in telling the story of the most momentous night the world has ever known, John draws for us his picture of the scene within the gateway of the High Priest's palace whilst the Lord is being examined. 'And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them and warmed himself' (John 18. 18). By this charcoal fire, in the shivering hour beyond midnight, Peter seeks warmth at the same flame as do his Master's foes. His place is indicative of more than want of bodily heat. It is near zero in his soul at this moment. Already he has lied to the maid who keeps the door; another few minutes and he will have em-

phasized his denial with coarse expletives such as his new fireside companions are using. O disciple! how quickly is the warmth of natural boasting and of self-trust overcome by the cold fear induced by self-love and the fear of man! And who is colder toward Christ than he whose soul is in the grip of these? 'IT WAS COLD.'

Another similar touch is in the same chapter at verse 28: 'Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early.' The word translated 'early' indicates a time between 'cock-crowing' and 'morning' (cf. Mark 13. 35), i.e., some time after three and before six in the morning.

What a night that had been! What ceaseless activity His enemies had put forth throughout its hours! Far into the night he had remained in loving converse with His own; then the little group had made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, whereupon Him had come His agony, His sweat of blood; where His hand had received the Cup of Suffering from the hand of the Father; where He had endured the traitor's kiss and the shame of being bound. Thence, led away by the armed band, hurried through the city streets, He had been haled before the High Priest, prejudged by Annas, condemned by Caiaphas, a judgment ratified by the whole Council.

The whole sum of these proceedings was illegal, for it was contrary to the prevailing law to try a prisoner at any time except during the day. But their hatred broke through all the decencies of legal procedure; it was expedient that this one Man die that the whole nation perish not. So Caiaphas had said, and so now do they display the shameless eagerness of white-hot desire to slay. Away with Him to Pilate; let this matter be settled before we break our fast; lose no time by waiting for the break of day.



So it was that Perfect Goodness but evoked from the turgid deeps of the heart of man a vile hatred, whose Hell-fanned energy brooked no tarrying. Wherefore Pilate began his labours betimes that day, and when they thrust Jesus into his presence the daylight had not come. 'IT WAS EARLY.'

'O break, O break, hard heart of mine,  
Thy weak self-love and guilty pride,  
His Pilate and His Judas were,  
Jesus my Lord is crucified!'

Calvary was past. The darkest Sabbath that ever the world experienced had worn its leaden hours through. In the garden of the sepulchre by Calvary, in Joseph's new tomb lay the Crucified. The hearts of His disciples were despondent; faith was dying. Bereft of the presence of their beloved Master, they were stunned, broken, defeated, dispirited. Soon they would have to face facts, and slowly, inevitably return to their homes and daily callings with the stigma of a lost cause upon them, and the memory of One haunting them whose words and deeds had raised great hopes which had, alas, deceived.

In this frame Mary Magdalene rose from a sleepless couch as that doleful Sabbath night wore its weary length away, and made her way to the Garden where the Lord lay entombed. 'The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark unto the sepulchre' (ch. 20. 1).

Yes, 'IT WAS YET DARK,' for as yet they knew not the Scripture that He should rise from the dead. Little wonder, therefore, that a gloom deep as Egyptian night enshrouded the spirits of that stricken-hearted group, for a living Lord is the source of all our confidence and gladness. An empty tomb is the birthplace of Christian joy.

So John, as he records the events of that victorious

first day of the week, that day that gave them back their Lord and Master from the grave to be theirs for evermore, takes a backward glance at the gloominess of the experience that preceded it. It but throws into sharper relief the present radiance to recollect the dark and cloudy day that went before.

It must have been with heavy hearts that the Seven brought their boat toward land after their barren night on Gennesaret, just as dawn spread on one of those forty days that followed the Resurrection. The hours of that night of unrequited toil had been long. Cast after cast had left their nets still empty, and night at last fled and left no glistening catch in their vessel.

Few experiences are so depressing as that of unrewarded labour, few pangs sharper than the realization of failure after well-meant effort. We may be sure that the Seven were in despondent mood as they steered to landward after that night.

A glad surprise awaited them. 'When the Morning was Now come Jesus stood on the shore' (ch. 21. 4). Night had brought them but dismal loss; morning brought them Jesus. It brought Him to their help in all His risen power. His direction, knowledge, power, and loving provision made them to rejoice. In the calm beauty of that morning they sat in His presence satisfied, sure of Him, and fed on the goodness His own hands had prepared for them.

We live in the same glad dispensation of 'morning'; it is ours to know (now by faith and soon by sight) that the victorious Christ is on the watch for us, guiding, caring, providing; His guidance making our service fruitful, His care meeting our needs, His presence filling our souls with peace.

Let us then make His interests our own, and He will make our needs His care.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MAN OF CALVARY

THE Incarnation was a relinquishment, a stoop, and an acceptance. To think of the Saviour's coming must needs carry the mind back to His former state of Heavenly Glory, to the renunciation of it all when He said, 'Lo, I Come,' and to the lowliness of the state into which He stooped when He came to Bethlehem.

What a moment in Heaven's history it must have been, when His mind to come to earth first expressed itself (Phil. 2. 5); when He rose up from that central height of uncreated Glory which He had held from the beginning, what amazed wonder among the high order of angelic hosts! What a thing it was for Him to rise thence, and divest Himself of the shining insignia of Supreme Kingship in order to assume the grey garb of a bondman in such a world as ours!

Yet, precious fact, He did it. Even His place of co-equal Glory with God He did not count impossible of relinquishment: the mind that moved Him looked not upon His own things, but 'upon the things of others.' He thought of us

'With pitying eye the Prince of Peace  
Beheld our helpless grief;  
He saw, and O! amazing love,  
He flew to our relief.'

God preceded His arrival here in the mysterious operation of preparing for Him a body (Heb. 10. 5). The Holy Ghost, through Mary as the honoured human vessel, wrought this Divine miracle, so that 'the Holy

Thing to be born should be called Son of God' (Luke 1. 35). Till, upon a day thronged with the coming and going of journeying men and women, in the humble caravanserai by Bethlehem of Judah, in the outhouse where beasts of burden sheltered, and to the rough manger whence they ate their provender—HE CAME!

Measure the distance between the prior glory and this lowly lot. Who can do it? He travelled all that humbling road that He might become our Saviour. His age-long 'delight in the sons of men' (Prov. 8. 31) drew Him down from the splendour of Heaven to the manger cot. Yet that did not complete His task, but only began it. It was not enough; He must needs go further.

BETHLEHEM was in order that CALVARY might be. He was born that He should die. The world's great ones have feared death, because it interrupts their achievements. He anticipated death as essential to His achievement. 'If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit' (John 12. 24). The world's heroes and history-makers have all held death at bay till the latest possible moment. He hastened to the appointed hour. Their deaths write 'finis' to work but partly accomplished. Death was His accomplishment. 'His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem' (Luke 9. 31). Therefore His soul hastened to the Cross. 'I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how I am straitened till it be accomplished' (Luke 12. 50). The birth was not enough; the miracles were not enough; the ministry was not enough. Only to give His life a ransom was enough. Hence His resolute face as He went up for the last time to Jerusalem. 'He set his face to go to Jerusalem' (Luke 9. 23).

When the hour for which He came into the world struck, He went out to the Garden of Gethsemane. There, His 'soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,'

He knelt beneath the moonlit sky, among the kindly olive trees, and prayed 'with strong crying and tears' (Hebrews 5. 7). Prayed till His sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground; prayed thrice, saying the same words; prayed till He was strengthened for the final strife, and arose saying, 'Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me' (Matt. 26. 46).

What a night! 'The night in which he was betrayed.' It brought Him the treachery of Judas, the indignity of the arrest, the shame of being bound, the humiliation of the journey to Caiaphas. And what a morning! the morning of the day on which Calvary's tragedy took place. It brought Him the pain of hearing false witness against Himself, the ribaldry of callous soldiers, their buffeting, the spittle on His cheek, the plucking of the hair from His face, the mockery before Herod, the travesty of justice before Pilate, the stripping, the robe of purple, the reed-sceptre, the crown of thorns, the scourging in presence of the people, the howl, 'Away with him, crucify him' (John 19. 15), the choice of Barabbas, the awful procession through the hooting streets, the heavy cross, till at length, as a lamb to the slaughter, they brought Him to Calvary.

Were ever such fiendish deeds perpetrated or ever such returns made for unsparing service and love? Nevertheless they but served to display the holy beauty of His character. He bore all uncomplaining, silent, unresisting, bearing witness to the truth. Our wondering hearts melt as we contemplate Him amid His foes that day. Yet all the shame of the Cross was not the Cross itself. The bearing of the shame was not enough, only the bearing of our sins could be enough.

On Calvary they raised the Cross. They nailed Him there, scorned Him in His pain, and derided Him in His anguish. They passed by Him wagging their heads,

and insulting Him with bitter, hateful words. He reviled not again, but lifted up His voice saying, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do' (Luke 23. 34). He thought of her who bare Him in that hour of racking pain; He declined an opiate; He was scorched with thirst; He was among 'dogs,' amid 'bulls of Bashan,' He was railed on even by the robbers who died at His side. Yet, with the mien of a King, He received one of them, and promised him rest in Paradise that day!

Lowly greatness! What heart but is moved as it dwells upon the Man of Calvary? Yet all this perfect example of submission, patience, endurance, and devotion, is not itself enough to complete the work. He must go yet further. He was truly Man. He longed for human fellowship. The first reason given for His choice of the twelve is 'that they might be with him' (Mark 3. 14). In His supremest moments He desired the presence of those whom He knew best understood and most loved Him. The moment of Glory in the Holy Mount found the three—Peter, James and John—with Him. The moment of the deep gloom and trouble of soul in Gethsemane found in Him this same hunger for fellowship. 'Abide ye here, and watch with Me' (Matt. 26. 38). The contradiction of sinners against Him caused Him no worse smart than did the want of understanding of His disciples. 'I looked for comforters, but I found none.'

God, Who well knows how much strength is added to His hard-pressed servants by the staunch presence of a loyal human helper, gave Moses a Joshua, Gideon a Phurah, David a Jonathan, Jeremiah a Baruch, Peter a Mark, and Paul a Luke. Yet in the greatest Hour of all history the Man of Calvary stood alone. 'They all forsook him and fled' (Matt. 26. 56). 'It is terribly lonely at the top,' a great Premier of this country said

of his high office. 'You have no one to lean on; every one leans on you.' Whatever measure of truth there is in this as applied to the burden of State affairs, it was true in the deepest sense of Him whose mission carried Him to the place of final loneliness. He had no human helper: everything depended on Himself alone.

There were three dread hours in which no sound came from the lips of the Crucified. Hours black as night, without and within. Untimely darkness wrapt this creation in its sable folds throughout those tremendous hours. They were hours in which the sufferer lay under the hand of God: under the lash of the scourge of God; in them Jehovah made the sins of His people draw together into one appalling and abominable load, and lie upon the Man of Calvary: in them the soul of our Surety smarted under the stroke as God made it an offering for sin; in them God made the Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us; in them, suffering willingly, our Substitute 'bare our sins in his own body on the tree' (1 Peter 2. 24). But the bitterest ingredient in that cup of woe, the keenest pang in that anguished wounding, was this: He could not find God! The God upon whom He had ever leaned, and whom He had always pleased, whose face had always beamed love upon Him, whose presence was the joy of His heart—He was gone from Him! No hand grasped His as He stretched it up through the dark. He was left alone! Alone, without God. Then the pains of Hell indeed got hold of Him; then did He lie in darkness and the deeps; then did He sink in deep mire; then did the waters of cold terror rush in upon His soul.

'Still, O my soul, the mystery see,  
He bears the load of sin for thee.'

Until, as grey light began once more to filter through the

darkness, the Son of God lifted up His voice in an exceeding great and bitter cry: a cry that blanched the faces of the huddled watchers, that perplexed Heaven, and that baffled Hell: 'MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?' (Matt. 27. 46).

After that, only the strong cry of a conscious Conqueror, 'IT IS FINISHED,' and the resigning word: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit,' and the Man of Calvary reclined His head upon His Father's breast and died.

NOT LESS THAN THIS HAD BEEN ENOUGH: BUT THIS LEAVES NAUGHT UNDONE.

The cross is past. Christ has died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and has been buried. The third-day morn sees Him raised from the dead for God has accepted His once-offered sacrifice.

'Saviour God! the altar's craving  
Thou has satisfied with Blood;  
Now in Heaven fresh incense waving  
Sweetly sounds this note abroad,  
Calvary's Victim  
Now adorns the Throne of God!'

The Man of Calvary is Lord of Glory; this is the proof of the glorious sufficiency of the Cross.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE GARDEN TOMB

**A**N integral part of the historical foundation of the apostolic Gospel is expressed in the words 'He was buried' (1 Cor. 15. 4). The fact of the burial of Christ lies, a deep gulf, between the facts of His death and His Resurrection. It demonstrates that the Death was real; it is the essential pre-condition of bodily resurrection. He really died—therefore He was buried. He was really buried—therefore the Resurrection is actual, literal, corporeal.

The tomb in which reverent hands laid the body of Jesus was *A New Tomb*. That it was new was in full keeping with the character of the events enacted there. He whose body lay awhile within it had wrought a work on which is founded the fabric of a new creation. Here a divine act of power was to demonstrate Christ as the first-fruits of a glorious harvest. A new age was about to dawn. He who rises hence will one day, from the place of highest dignity, the very throne of God, say: 'Behold, I make all things new.'

It was, say the Evangelists, *A Rock-hewn Tomb* (Mark 15. 46; Matt. 27. 60). This, too, is in full fitness with the Divine stamp of these immense events. A work of incontestable truth is here to be enacted; a work on whose steadfastness the very purposes of God hang; on whose rock-like immoveableness the souls of the elect depend. This tomb is Divinely pre-ordained in its very construction, which forbids all attempts to suggest any explanation of the stupendous miracle which is to

take place here, save that it is brought about by the putting forth of the strength of His might, who is the God of Resurrection. 'All the objections of unbelief have completely failed to chip one fragment from the rock of the truth of the Resurrection of Christ.'

It was, moreover, *A Virgin Tomb*. 'Wherein never man before was laid' (Luke 23. 53); 'Wherein was never man yet laid' (John 19. 41).

This is equally of a piece with all Christ's story. He was born as was never man yet born; lived as never man yet lived; spoke words such as never man spake: wrought deeds of power and mercy that no other man did: suffered as never man yet suffered: died as never man yet died. Through all His course He was without a compeer. From this tomb He will rise as never man yet rose. Wherefore God ordained that His body should rest awhile in a tomb wherein never man had yet lain.

It was, says Matthew, *Joseph's Tomb*, the personal property of Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27. 60). The Josephs of Scripture are a worthy group, and this timely gift of his tomb gives this honourable counsellor a place among them. When first the name Joseph appears on the page of Scripture the Holy Spirit is careful to record its meaning. It means addition (Gen. 30. 24). Until the day when the Lord rose from Joseph's tomb, Death had been to mankind a dark terminus of dread. Men were afraid of Death all through the Old Testament ages: 'All their lifetime subject to bondage' engendered by such fear. Mere momentary glimpses of life beyond death were granted to Abraham, Job, Hezekiah, Daniel, and some others. But now out of Joseph's tomb an addition is made of future certainties of blessedness. Life and incorruptibility are to be brought to light. Here is to be shown conclusively that Death does not

write 'Finis' to man's story. Christ Risen writes new words on our hearts—Resurrection! Life!

Further, it was *A Garden Tomb*. 'Now . . . in the garden a new sepulchre' (John 19. 41). It was Spring of the year, and the earth itself was repeating its parable of resurrection. After the death of winter, 'the flowers appear on the earth.' We cannot but think of the Garden of Eden when the garden setting of the Tomb of Christ is remembered. At man's creation there was a garden in a scene of life. Man turned it into a place of death by one act of disobedience. Here, all that is reversed: a garden in a scene of death becomes transformed—a place whence springs life that knows no death. And all comes through one act of obedience—the death of the Cross.

When Paradise is brought before us at the end of the Bible there is no allusion to the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. Instead we are bidden to look on 'The Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.' No cherubim's sword now guards the way to it; all have free access to it who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. From the Garden Tomb the way is opened to the Garden of God.

It was, too, *A Fragrant Tomb*. 'A mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight' (John 19. 39). This fragrant abundance was Nicodemus' gift, and we may be glad of it as evidence of his faith, but otherwise it was superfluous. The precious body needed no spices to cover the odours of corruption. 'He whom God raised from the dead saw no corruption.' Never before, never since, has a grave received a dead body and yet remained uninvaded by the taint of corruption. Christ's death was a miracle. He died, though death had no lien upon Him, no right to detain Him. 'It was not possible that he should be holden of it.' Victorious

Lord! His resting place for those three days was as uncorrupt as every other part of His track from glory to glory.

Then, it was also *A Sealed Tomb*. 'They went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch' (Matt. 27. 66).

One tomb, hewn out of the rock, one Body laid therein, its one doorway closed by one great stone, sealed with the seal of the greatest earthly power then existing—the Roman Empire. No possibility now of substitution, interference, or illicit exhumation. The tomb is made sure as human vigilance can make it.

But on the morning of the first day of the week, the guard scattered, the seal broken, the stone rolled back, the tomb empty, the Body gone!

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,  
Christ hath burst the gates of Hell.  
Hallelujah!

So we go with the women and peer into *An Empty Tomb*. 'He is risen: he is not here: behold the place where they laid him' (Mark 16. 6).

Joseph's gift was needed only for a very little while. Nicodemus' spices also, and the linen swathing bands likewise. For on that glad morning the sight of the interior of the empty tomb brought wonderment and perplexity to loving disciples, wonderment which soon gave place to worshipping joy.

'With myrrh and with aloes  
We bound and we swathed Him;  
Lovingly, loyally  
Laved we and bathed Him;  
With cerecloth and band  
For His grave we arrayed Him—  
But O! He is gone  
From the place where we laid Him!

Human hands emptied the cross and filled the tomb. 'When they had fulfilled all that was written of him they took him down from the cross and laid him in a sepulchre' (Acts 13. 29).

Then God emptied the tomb and with Him who had lain awhile therein filled the throne.

The enthroned Christ is the living guarantor that faith in Him is valid for salvation, that the dead in Him shall rise again, that the Gospel is true, that its preachers are faithful witnesses, that believers are of all men most blessed, and that eternal redemption has been once for all obtained for them.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ENTHRONEMENT OF CHRIST

‘Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand till I make thy foes thy footstool’ (Psalm 110. 1).

**D**AVID is indisputably the author of this prophetic oracle. Indisputably, that is, for all who bow to the authority of Christ: for He not only gave David as the writer and the Holy Spirit as the Inspirer, but founded His question to His opponents on this double premise, and confounded them by the argument accordingly deduced (see Matthew 22. 41-45). So that if David be not the author, the Saviour’s argument is invalid, His victory over the Pharisees unreal, and His authority as a Teacher gone. Every believer is under obligation to recognize the Davidic authorship of this word on the enthronement of Messiah; loyalty to Christ demands it.

In the spirit of prophecy David was transported through many centuries when he overheard this utterance. His ear was laid to the door of the throne-room of Heaven at the moment when the Risen Christ, bearing the fresh spoils of His conquest over sin and death, swept on high, entered the lift-up gates, passed through the everlasting doors, and reached the presence-chamber of the Eternal Majesty. There David caught the greeting with which the Glorified One was hailed, and heard the voice of Jehovah bidding Christ enthrone Himself in heaven until the moment should strike for Him to come forth to enthrone Himself on earth.

The text has three members or divisions. First, the designation of Christ by David as Lord, ‘Jehovah said

unto my Lord'; second, the enthronement of Christ by Jehovah, 'Sit thou at my right hand'; third, the purpose of the future, 'till I make thine enemies thy footstool.'

In the New Testament striking and numerous uses are made of the prophecy now before us, and some brief consideration of these is the writer's present purpose.

1. *Designation of Christ as David's Lord.* 'Jehovah said unto my Lord.'

It is the Lord Jesus Himself Who opens this word to us. He, having answered the many questions of His opposers, at length Himself puts to them a seemingly elementary question: 'What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?' Every Jewish schoolboy had the answer to that: it seemed almost an insult to ask learned Pharisees such a question. They reply however 'The son of David.' To this the Lord returns with a further question: 'How then doth David in the Spirit (and therefore with unquestioned accuracy and rightness) call him *Lord*, saying, "Jehovah said unto *my Lord*, etc. . . ." 'If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?'

Here was a dilemma for the doctors. Messiah is to be both David's son and David's Lord. 'Son,' a title to which are attached ideas of succession and subordination; 'Lord' a title usually applied to God Himself in the sacred writings, and always conveying lofty thoughts of priority and superiority. How can these both be simultaneously true of the coming One? A descendant of David, yet before David; a scion of David's line, yet named as Lord, infinitely higher than the head of that line! They had no answer for this riddle; they were silenced, so much so that never again durst they put a question to the prophet of Nazareth.

For, in spite of their pride of learning they 'knew not (Messiah) neither the voices of the prophets which are

read every Sabbath.' They were so full of self-satisfaction that it had never dawned on them to wait humbly for light from God on such mysterious scriptures as Genesis 18 (where one who is called 'man' in verse 2 is called 'the Lord' in verse 13) and Genesis 32 (where the wrestler is 'a man' in verse 24, but is recognized as 'God' in verse 30). Nor had Isaiah's meaning ever been sought out by them, who said, 'Unto us a child is born . . . and his Name shall be called , . . the Mighty God' (Isaiah 9. 6), nor Micah's, who wrote 'Out of Bethlehem Ephratah shall he come forth that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting' (Micah 5. 2). Had they abased their pride and walked humbly with their God, it might have been revealed to them that whilst their hoped-for Messiah would wear true manhood as David's son, He would yet (wonder surpassing!) be entitled to take His place on the one seat which none may occupy save God, the Throne of Him who has said, 'I am Jehovah, and my glory will I not give to another.'

2. *The Enthronement of Christ at the right hand of God.*  
'Sit thou at my right hand.'

The New Testament citations and allusions to this word are very full and rich. The writer to the Hebrews uses it as (a) *a proof of Christ's Deity*. 'But to which of the angels hath He said at any time, "Sit thou at my right hand"' (Heb. 1. 13). This is the crown of the argument of the first chapter of Hebrews. Psalm 2. 7 and Psalm 89. 26, 27, are there quoted to show that God addresses Christ as 'Son.' Psalm 97. 7, or, it may be, Deut. 32. 43, is quoted to show that angels are commanded by God to worship Christ; Psalm 45. 6, 7 is cited to show that God Himself addresses the Son as God; Psalm 102. 25, 27, to show that creatorship and unchangeableness are Christ's powers and attributes; and then last, topstone of all, our prophecy is called in to witness that Christ is



God because He occupies a place to which it is unthinkable that the creature could be exalted.

(b) *The descent of the Holy Spirit is a sure indication of Christ's Enthronement* (Acts 2. 33-35). 'Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this which ye now see and hear. For David saith . . . Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand . . .'

The giver of the Holy Spirit is the enthroned Christ, according to His own word, 'If I go away, I will send him (the Holy Spirit) unto you' (John 16. 7). Not until a glorified Christ had taken His seat on high could the Holy Spirit be given (John 16. 7; John 7. 39), but since then, every deed of power and grace seen in the life and service of Christ's believing ones on earth is proof of a regnant Lord in the seat of supreme power. 'He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.'

(c) *That Christ's sacrifice for sin is final, sufficient, and efficacious is attested by the fact of His enthronement.* 'When he had made purification of sins (he) sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high' (Heb. 1. 3). 'He, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb. 10. 12).

Calvary's offering has gloriously effected its object, dealt with sin to God's glory, answered every question raised by the entry, continuance and prevalence of sin, amply provided for the approach of the believing sinner to God, and secured the blessing of every one who trusts therein. The Divine affidavit of all this exists in the fact that He who made that offering has Himself been accorded the supremest place in the favour and sunshine of God's presence.

(d) *Christ enthroned is the guarantee that His people will be*

*supported and brought through.* 'We have such a high priest who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens' (Heb. 8. 1). 'It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us' (Romans 8. 34).

Wonderful that the interests of His people are His care in the high place of His exaltation. If He occupies a throne in kingly power, He is also a priest, combining these two offices in Himself on behalf of those who are still beset with infirmity in their walk of faith in the world below. He is there for them, and always there. No waning powers or decaying abilities with Him; for all succeeding generations of those who come to God by way of Him He is there in the undiminishing might of endless life. His presence before God is itself a mighty and prevailing intercession, and to His representations God is ever propitious.

'He lives, He lives, what glorious consolation,  
Exalted at His Father's own right hand.  
He pleads for us, and by His intercession  
Enables all His saints by grace to stand.'

(e) *Christ enthroned is the revelation of the believer's standing before God.* 'The greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ when he raised Him from the dead and made him to sit at his own right hand in the heavenly places' (Eph. 1. 19, 20).

The working of God's immeasurable might received its supreme manifestation in the raising of Christ from the grave and the lifting up of the Risen One to the right hand place of power. This passage proceeds to show that in so doing to Christ, God did it also to us who are 'in Christ.' We lay in the death of trespasses and sins, but in a quickened Christ God quickened us, raised us up in

association with Christ in resurrection, and set us alongside Him in His high station of heavenly glory. This is divine reckoning, true in the face of present appearances, and destined to stand accomplished historically when all the counsel of Him who calleth things that are not as though they were, shall have fruition in its own hour.

One place have I in heaven above,  
The glory of the Throne.  
On this dark earth whence He is gone,  
I have one place alone.  
And dear as is His place on high,  
His footsteps are below  
Where He has gone through shame and wrong  
There also would I go:  
Lord, where Thou diedst I would die,  
For where Thou livest, *THERE AM I!*

(f) *Christ enthroned supplies a magnet for the believer's affections.* 'If ye then were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God' (Col. 3. 1).

All our truest and best hopes and interests are in heaven; for all our possessions that corrode not nor decay, are there. They are ours because of Him, and He who gave them us is there also. *Sursum corda!* O believer! Let not your affections run along the grovelling levels of earth, or fix themselves on things which are to perish with the using. Look up! your Lord is yonder, and your life is hid with Him in God.

(g) *Christ enthroned is the strong encouragement of the pilgrim people of God.* 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God' (Heb. 12. 2).

His feet have gone the way of faith before us. All opposition we may meet, all discouragements and temptations, He has felt before us, and in a measure

greater and more burdensome than we shall ever know. In dependence on His God He endured, in fixedness of holy purpose He resolutely put shame behind Him, and pressed on to finish the tremendous task life held for Him. Having won through, glory is His portion. He sits beyond the reach of all earth's waves.

‘All the shame of Calvary’s story  
Told in answering glory now.’

When we are like to break down in our course, when tempted to give up and sink by the way, we are bidden to ‘Look off unto Jesus,’ and to ‘consider him lest we wax weary and faint in our souls.’ For He hath said, ‘To him that overcometh will I give to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne’ (Rev. 3. 21).

(h) *Christ enthroned is the assurance of effectual help in our work of witness in the world.* ‘So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken unto them, was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that followed them’ (Mark 16. 19, 20).

He is on high, yet He is with His heralds. The seat of majesty in heaven is His, yet He fulfils His word to those who go at His command, ‘Lo, I am with you all the days.’ They do not work unsupported, unattended. He is still working in the world, but He is using our lips, our hands, our feet. Take courage, lowly worker; at your side is the All-Powerful One, clothing your feeble witness with His unction and confirming it with spiritual fruit.

‘He alone the mighty preacher,  
Gathering in His own,  
And the praise to God returning,  
His alone.’

3. Briefly let us notice the last division of our prophecy, *The Purpose of God for Christ is Universal Empire*. 'Till thine enemies be made thy footstool.'

Now, heavenly hierarchies own his sway (1 Peter 3. 22). Soon comes the moment when God shall say to Him, 'Rise up, take thy great power and reign gloriously from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.' The fact that all authority in the heavens and in earth has been committed to Him is the assurance that ultimately 'He must reign till all his enemies are under his feet' (1 Cor. 15. 25). It is unthinkable that rebellion against His authority should succeed for ever in the world. So we bide the set time in the Father's counsels when this last promise of the prophecy of Psalm 110. 1 shall be fulfilled; when Christ, coming in sudden blaze of irresistible might and glory, shall crush every opposing rule, authority and power, and having quelled all enemies shall inaugurate His reign of splendour and peace, the Golden Age for which the world has so long groaned in waiting.

Meantime let us agree with David in calling Him Lord. Let us accord Him in our hearts the place given Him by God—the Throne.

'In your hearts enthrone Him  
There let Him subdue  
All that is not holy,  
All that is not true.'

So shall every moral foe of His that has usurped a place within us be brought to nought beneath the Conqueror's feet.