

WHY DID CHRIST COME INTO THIS WORLD?

Thinking men and women everywhere must surely be agreed that there is something very remarkable, and strangely unique about what we call, "The Christmas Season". The attention of millions is somehow directed to that simple event that took place that day in the little town of Bethlehem. It is as though God Himself is rising up and saying, "All men, -take note; -this is the Answer to everything". He would have every eye focused on that stable, and all that is transpiring within it. He would have us know that this is His Way. The season itself is one of His sovereign miracles.

I wonder, too, if it has ever occurred to you that every letter we write, and every document that is registered, carries with it some recognition of the birth of Christ. The very date it carries looks back through the centuries to that "day of days", and to what God did for us at that time. Even the newspapers we read, are dated according to that event. Surely an Almighty and All-knowing God stands behind this remarkable phenomenon.

The important thing for us, however, is to understand THE REASONS WHY CHRIST CAME. To help us in this matter we shall now consider a number of statements, which the Lord Himself made concerning it. When we put these statements together, we shall have the perfect picture of the Christian Gospel. We shall know precisely why He came amongst us. We shall then be faced with the decision as to what we will do about.

The first of our verses will be found in Matt.5: 17, where our Lord said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law: -I am NOT come to destroy, BUT to fulfill".

The Lord was referring here, of course, to the first five books of the Old Testament, otherwise known as the Pentateuch, -and particularly to the Ten Commandments, which are the very heart and core of that "Law". In Matt.5: 17, He is saying that one reason for His coming is that He might "fulfill that Law. Let us look closely at that statement.

There are a number of ways in which it could be said that Christ fulfilled the Law. He fulfilled its Messianic promises, -and also its remarkable "types", -and certainly He kept those Ten commandments, -but to get the Lord's own intended meaning in that verse, we need to look at the passage that immediately follows it (i.e.vs.21-48), -and explains it. Our Lord points out that, while Moses might simply say, "No murder", He says, "No anger"; -Moses speaks of "No adultery", -but He says, "No lustful LOOKING". And so it goes on. Moses speaks of some kind of "selective loving"; -Christ speaks of LOVE FOR ALL, -sacrificial and unbounded (See vs.43-48). It is in that sense that Christ "fulfilled the Law", -He brought it to its "fullness". The Law only gave us a glimpse of Divine Righteousness; -now we are to have a full view. And that will come to us through Christ; -through what He taught, and through what He was.

We need to see that the single and simple purpose of the Mosaic Law was to show us our sinfulness (See Rom.3: 20; 5:20), and in that way, set the stage for the Gospel of God's GRACE. Although elementary, it had sufficed for its own purpose, but now it must be "filled out", -and Christ was here to do just that. He did not come to destroy it, but to "fulfill" it. He would "fill it out", -He would bring it to its full stature.

We must add, here, that this, "filling out", or enlarging, of the LAW was itself a great mercy from the Lord, for, while Heaven has everything to offer to convicted sinners, it has nothing to offer to those who persist with their delusions that they have some righteousness of their own. Some might foolishly think that they have kept the ten commandments, but the fuller unfolding will surely convince them that they need some other way, - the way of God's mercy and God's grace, -all about to be revealed (See Eph.2: 8,9; Luke 14: 11). On all accounts, then, we must thank the Saviour that He came NOT to destroy the law, BUT to fulfill it!

That brings us on, now, to the second key verse of our series, -again a negative and a positive. We refer to John 3:17 where our Lord said, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved". The Lord is saying that He did NOT come to condemn, BUT to save.

Let us look at that negative statement first; -"not to condemn". There are many who have grossly misinterpreted that statement, and made it imply that Christ is somehow more lenient, and is able to disregard our sins, -and the righteous judgement of them. That, of course, is FAR from the truth, as most of us will agree. What the Lord was really saying was that He did not come to our world with condemnation in His mind, -it was SALVATION that He had in view; -that was His consuming passion. Moses and the Law were more than sufficient to condemn the whole Adam race; -His was the positive task, SAL V A TION for those who were already condemned. HE comes to lift us up again. All glory to His Name!

As for the positive side of John 3:17,- O, how much could be said about that! He came to save! O, what oceans of happy Christian truth are found in that simple word, "SA VE"! It is often said that Christ's salvation covers the past, the present, and the future:- As for the past...He saves us from the PENALTY of sin (by bearing that penalty for us, -1 Pet.2: 24; Isa.53: 5 etc.).

As for the present... He saves us from the POWER of sin (by working into us our rightful share in His death and resurrection: -See Rom.6: 3-14).

As for the future... He will save us from the very PRESENCE of sin (by taking us away, at His chosen time, to be with Him in Glory (John 14:2).

All that, of course, is true, and happy is the man who presses on into these ever -deepening discoveries.

One thought we would like to add, relates to the original word used for "saved" in John 3:17. That word is "SOZO" and it is also used in Acts 4 in relation to the physical healing of an impotent man, and we are told he was "made whole" (v.9), -shall we say "restored to 100% condition". Exactly the same word, "SOZO" is translated "saved" in v.12, and there refers to spiritual salvation, -"we must be saved". We can only conclude that spiritual salvation is also a "restoration to normality", -a recovery of the divine plan for His human creatures. Thank God, we can all be "made whole" in that sense also. Our Lord came to do just that, -not to condemn but to "make whole". All praise to His Name!

The next statement we shall consider is found in Matt.20: 28, where our Lord says -so beautifully, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister", -in other words, He is here, not to be served, but TO SERVE. That is His explanation to us that is why He came.

We notice, in the passage (v.20 onwards), the Lord had been drawn into a discussion concerning His coming Kingdom, and He points out that in His Kingdom there will be a big difference from all other kingdoms, -where the "top ones" are the ones who hold the authority. In His Kingdom it will be the "low ones", or lowly ones, who will be chief. It is at that point that He makes His statement that He Himself did not come to be served, but TO SERVE.

Most of us will agree that this was something quite revolutionary. Amongst us, it is quite normal for any king to have, around him, a whole, retinue of courtiers who are dedicated to the meeting of his needs, -providing him with every possible comfort. Not so with the Great Son of Man. He is here to serve, -not to be served. He is here to take the basin and the towel (See John 13:3-5) and wash the feet of His ever-aspiring disciples. His Kingdom is, and will be, an entirely different Kingdom. It will be "heavenly" -not "earthly". How slow we all are to learn that servant-hood is the essence of real kingliness!

If we ask, -to what extent would He be prepared to serve us, -what will be the limits? -the answer is supplied in the closing words of the same sentence, -to serve, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY" (Matt.20:28). In other words, there are no limits! This Son of Man (Messiah) will pay the price for our sins; -He will die for us ON CALVARY! O, what a servant-hood is that, -Messiah dying for His rebel creatures. What a revelation! And then will come the resurrection! Hallelujah!

Are we not right in saying that all this puts to shame our own mean thoughts about "serving"? In the case of Christ it was to be a case of vicarious sacrifice, -the Holy Lamb of God taking upon Himself, and "carrying away" the sins of the world (John 1: 29). He was God's "Second Man" dying for the first man, -Adam and all Adam's offspring. It was a great over- payment, but a payment just the same, -willingly paid on our behalf. That, He says, is why He came, -that is the "service" He will render. Bethlehem will lead on to Calvary, -Christ will die, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring US to God" (1 Pet.3: 18). That, He says, is why He came. We say, surely, surely, there is no message like the Christian Gospel!

The question still remains, however, -"How can people like ourselves actually receive the benefits of what Christ has done?" What will be THE WAY IN to all these blessings? How are we to respond? Thank God, our Lord has made that plain also, and, -in Luke 5:32, He shows us THE APPOINTED WAY. Again speaking of His coming to Bethlehem, He says: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to REPENTANCE". That, we may say, is WHY He came; -He is here to issue His call to sinners.

As to the so-called "righteous", He has nothing to say to them. If, in spite of all they have heard, they still persist with their delusions that they have some "righteousness" of their own, they must continue in their folly, -and to their doom. They will hear no call from the Saviour. If, on the other hand, they will face up to the truth, -sweet music will reach them, -the "music" of His voice, and the Gospel call.

It is interesting to note that, at the very commencement of His public ministry, our Lord said, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel (Mark 1: 15). As for the word "repent", the original (METANEUO) signifies "a change of mind", or, "an amendment in the seat of moral reflection" (W.E. Vine; - Gk. Dictionary). In our own simple terms it just means a change in the direction in which we have been going; -a genuine "about turn". For long, we have had our faces toward sin, and our backs toward God; -now that whole attitude must go into reverse. As with those

Thessalonians believers of old, we must "turn to God from 'idols' to serve the Living and True God" (1 Thess.1: 9). Or, as with that Prodigal Son, it must be "Backs to the pigs, and faces toward HOME, - and to awaiting and patient father" (See Luke 15:14-24). And how wonderful it is that God graciously HELPS us in that also! He "gives us repentance" (Acts 11: 18), -and He "draws us to Himself" (John 6:44).

Let us all respond to those pleadings, and let us "believe" God's own glorious Gospel. Christ has given His Life a Ransom for us; He is RISEN FROM THE DEAD, - "alive for evermore" (Rev.1: 18). Let us make HIM our All. Christ came into the world that we might do just that. May He, indeed, help us!

As we now bring our meditation to a close, there is just one more closely-related verse, which we would like to look into. Our Lord is again speaking about His coming into the world, and giving HIS REASONS for that coming. And, once more, as we shall see, His positive statement is immediately preceded by its corresponding negative. We refer to John1 0: 10 where He says, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: -I am come THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, AND THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY".

We suggest that this verse "over spans", or "binds together" those verses we discussed previously, and it is the crown and glory of them all. He does not come to rob or to kill, (we were, in fact, already dead! -see Eph. 2:1) He comes to GIVE US LIFE, -LIFE ABUNDANT! O, what a purpose was that; -to RAISE men from their spiritual graves. What He did for Lazarus in a physical sense (See John 11, -the next chapter!), He will do for us spiritually. We, too, have long been in our tombs (no true contact with God, -out of touch with heavenly realities), but He will quicken us to Life (Eph.2: 1). We shall live again! We shall be able to say "Abba; -Father", and heavenly things will be to us the REAL things.

We notice that, when Lazarus "came forth", he was still "bound hand and foot with grave - clothes" (v.44). But the great thing was that he was alive. And, very soon, even those grave -clothes were "loosed from him", and he was "free indeed" (John 8:36). Very soon (John12: 2) he had his place at the feast of thanksgiving, and the whole house was filled with fragrance. Lazarus, and many others, had "seen the Glory of God". All this, we say again, was why Christ came into our world (See also John11: 40)"

Returning now to our key -verse, (John10:10), it is important to see that our Lord's statement was made right at the center of His well known discourse on "shepherding", in which He was emphasizing the vast difference between false shepherds and true ones. There is no doubt that He had the "religious leaders" at Jerusalem particularly in His view, -especially when we remember the tremendous clash that is outlined in the preceding chapter, -John 9, -and which clearly flows on into chapter ten. Christ is saying that it is those long -gowned "religionists" who were the false shepherds; -they were the ones who were "stealing and killing and destroying". He, on the other hand was here to GIVE life, and to give it more abundantly. The others might be good at "taking",-He was hereto GIVE. He was no thief, -nor would He ever be; -He was the Good Shepherd, -here to lay down His own Life for the sheep (v .15). Indeed, as we now know. He had His plans to impart that Life, -raised and glorified, into His trusting people, -thus forming that mystic but mighty ORGANISM which we now know as His Church. Far be the thought that HE would rob us of anything!

We do not hesitate to say that the mere suggestion that Christ robs His people is an outrageous lie; -one of the most despicable deceptions ever devised in hell. And yet, what multitudes have been duped by it! Right until today, there are countless souls who hesitate to come to Christ for fear that He will rob them of something. They continue to say, -"If I let Christ control my life, I shall lose so much. I shall be stripped of the legitimate joys of life; -I shall lose my friends, and my popularity, -and I shall even be worse off financially, because of those endless 'appeals' for this and for that". All this, of course, is a gross deception; -it is Satan's lie. The true friends of Christ will heartily testify with Paul that "...godliness... is GREAT GAIN" (1 Tim.6: 6).

It has been well said that "Christ only takes from us what He knows will ultimately harm us, - or rob us of His best". From our own considerable experience, we heartily endorse that. It is true!

We will do well to remember that the very lie we are discussing was the great original lie, which Satan used when he first deceived Eve and Adam. Posing as Eve's friend, he suggested that God must be robbing them of something by putting any restrictions on the use of the trees of the garden of Eden (Gen.3: 1). Although our parents were already surrounded by so many evidences of God's loving kindness and gracious provision, Eve chose to believe the lie. She took of the forbidden fruit, - and with what tragic consequences!

Should we not, then, ask God to deliver us from all those totally unfounded fears about losing anything through yielding to Christ? And let us carefully avoid those "false shepherds" to whom we earlier referred, and who, in a very deep sense, are the real "robbers" of God's flock. How much better to place ourselves firmly in the care of the Good Shepherd Himself, and know for ourselves that Life Abundant which He gives, and which is so beautifully described in Psalm twenty -three. O, may the Dear Lord help us. Thank God, He came, -and gave us His reasons. All praise to His Name.

The Saviour Christ has come The Saviour Christ has come Our Blessed Lord from Heaven God's own Beloved Son To seek and save the lost To pay sin's awful cost - The Saviour Christ has come.

O praise the Lord He's come O praise the Lord He's come Down from the courts above To manifest God's love la To meet my need He came All glory to His Name The Saviour Christ has come.