

Prophecies of Christ's Divinity



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AND FOUR OTHER RADIO SERMONS

by
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John Morley, a well-known writer and statesman who was not a Christian, said, "If I believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and my Saviour, I would never write or talk anything else."

That is exactly what I purpose to do. Actually, for the Christian minister there is only one subject, and that subject is a man, and that man is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Someone overheard a man on a street corner saying to another, "Jesus is that Somebody you can't match." And that is true. He cannot be matched, either before or since His appearance here on earth, and no one will ever match Him because He is the Son of the living God.

Even Napoleon Bonaparte recognized this, for he said to General Bertrand, "I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ was no mere man." Then he continued by declaring that between Christ and every other person in the world there was no possible term of comparison. Napoleon said, "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I founded empires. We rested the creations of our genius upon force, but Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love, and at this very hour millions would gladly die for Him."

In answer to the question of a Los Angeles pastor, "What do you think of Jesus Christ?" Dr. Alfred Adler, a psychologist of the Jewish faith, replied, "Whenever I hear His name I stop in reverence to the greatest character of human history."

Even William Lecky, a skeptical historian, said, "The three short years of the public ministry of Jesus have done more to soften and regenerate mankind than all the moralizing of all the moralists, and all the philosophizing of all the philosophers since the world began."

The statements of these great men are true, but why are they true? Why Jesus' tremendous influence on the world? Why was He the greatest character ever to appear on the earth? Why has He changed the world more than any other man? The answer given by those who believe the Holy Scripture is that He was not a mere man. True. He was a man, but He was also the Son of God.

The Bible not only teaches, but declares, the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is true not only of the New Testament, which is the record of His life and of the work and teachings of His apostles, but also of the prophecies of the Old Testament, which declared that the coming Messiah, or Christ, would be a divine Being.

The first prophecy which we shall notice is that of 1 Chronicles 17:13, inspired by God, which used these words:

"I will be his father, and he shall be my son."

The coming Messiah, then, was to be the Son of God. Based on this prophecy, David, who was also a prophet, called His Son his "Lord" (Psalm 110:1). Jesus quoted this with evident application to Himself in Matthew 22:44. Turning to Psalm 2:7, we read:

"The Lord [or Jehovah] hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

The Messiah who was to appear was to be the only begotten Son of God, an expression which in Acts 13:33 and Romans 1:4 applies to the resurrection of Jesus, which was promotion from life here on earth in the form of a servant to exaltation in heaven.

Our Saviour divested Himself of His heavenly glory

and took the form of a servant when He came to this world through the miracle of the virgin birth (Philippians 2 and Matthew 1).

After His work on earth and His atoning sacrifice upon the cross, He was buried in Joseph's new tomb and was raised from the dead on the third day. His resurrection was thus a promotion from life here on earth, in the form of the suffering servant of Jehovah, to life and exaltation in the royal estate.

Through the inspiration of God, the prophet Isaiah, who lived at least seven hundred years before Christ was born, pictured the deity of the coming Messiah, whom He described as—

"... a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch ... out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1).

The apostle John declared that Isaiah saw Christ's glory (John 12:41), and he did, more than any of the other prophets. No one ever saw more of the glory of Christ than did Isaiah, not even Abraham who saw Christ's day and rejoiced (John 8:56). Nor Moses who wrote of Him. Nor David who sang of Him. Nor the apostles, Peter and Paul, who preached His gospel. Nor the apostle John who, while exiled on the Isle of Patmos, saw Him standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. More than any of these, more than all of them together, Isaiah saw Christ's glory and spoke of Him. And what did he say about the coming, glorious King-Messiah? Listen:

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

"Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

The word "Lord" here is Jehovah, the living God Himself. And the prophecy is that unto the people of God would be born a Child, a Son would be given, and He would reign on David's throne forever and ever. The name of this King on this throne, this King-Messiah, this Coming One, this Christ, was "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." This is a definite prophecy concerning the deity of the Messiah.

Then we must not miss the great prophecy of Micah 5:2, written many centuries before Jesus was born to the virgin mother that night when the shepherds watched their flocks on the hills of Judea. The very place of the Messiah-Christ's birth is here indicated.

"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."

Jehovah is speaking here and He declares that the One to be born in Bethlehem had been from everlasting. His "goings forth have been from of old," from the days of eternity. He comes forth "unto me"—that is, unto Jehovah—and in verse 4 He is pictured as the Good Shepherd:

"He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God."

And in the last part of this verse we read the prophecy that "He [shall] be great unto the ends of the earth." This certainly is true of the Lord Jesus Christ, for His gospel is now being preached in earth's remotest regions.

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the Messiah as "Jehovah our righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:5, 6, A.R.V.). And Malachi speaks of Him as Jehovah—

"... whom ye seek, ... even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in" (Malachi 3:1).

Both the Old and the New Testament are just full of statements upholding the glorious teaching of the divinity

of the Messiah, or Christ our Lord. For instance, names and titles that are restricted exclusively to deity are applied to Jesus Christ. You will notice one of these in the ninth chapter of Isaiah, the sixth verse, where the Child to be born is called "The mighty God." In the same verse He is called "The everlasting Father," or the "Father of Eternity" (A.R.V., margin). In the New Testament we read that He is called God.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

That this applies to Christ, the proof is found in verse 14:

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

The "only begotten" is Christ, as we read in John 3:16.

Again in the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, the Messiah is called "Immanuel," which means "God with us." This prophecy was fulfilled at the holy birth in Bethlehem, according to the testimony of the angel in Matthew 1:23 and 2:1.

The Messiah of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New is called the "Son of God" over forty times in the New Testament. Christ Himself unhesitatingly accepted this title. For instance, in Luke 22:70 He was asked, "Art thou then the Son of God?" And He answered, "I am." In John 5:18 we read that He declared that God was His Father. His enemies knew that by doing this He was making Himself equal with God. This is the way they understood it, and this is the way He meant it.

In John 1:18 He is called—

"... the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father."

Going to the very end of the New Testament, we read in Revelation 1:17 that Christ is called "the first and the

last." This is the same phrase used for the Jehovah of the Old Testament in Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12. In Revelation 22:13 He is called "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and Omega is the last. This means that Christ is the divine completeness or fullness.

In Malachi 3:1 there is a prophecy that—

"The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple."

This was fulfilled in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. He did come to His Temple suddenly and cleansed its holy precincts from the commercial undertakings found there.

Over and over in the Scriptures our Saviour is called "Lord." For instance, at His birth the angel declared that He was "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). In Acts 4:26 the apostles, quoting the Old Testament Scripture in the Psalms, speak of the Lord and Christ as being identical. In verse 33 He is called "the Lord Jesus."

The apostles preached everywhere that "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:11). When the apostle Thomas, sometimes called "Doubting Thomas" but should really be called "Believing Thomas," received the evidence of our Saviour's resurrection, he bowed his heart before Him and called Him "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

There are many other evidences of the divinity of the Messiah. For instance, in Matthew 28:18 He declared:

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

He proved by His works that He had power over disease, over death, over nature, over demons (Matthew 8:3; Luke 7:14, 15; John 2; Matthew 8). This is omnipotence.

Another evidence of Christ's divinity is His omniscience. He knew men's thoughts (Matthew 9:4). He knew the secrets of men's lives (John 4:16-19). He knew that Judas would betray Him (John 6:64). He knew all things (John 16:30). As the apostle Paul puts it in speaking of Christ—

"In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

According to the Old Testament, only God knows the hearts of the children of men (2 Chronicles 6:30; Psalm 44:21).

The Scriptures plainly declare Christ's preexistence. He Himself said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). Here He took the name of Deity, the great I AM. Isaiah spoke of His glory long before He was born as a man (Isaiah 6:1; John 12:41). He was "before all things" (Colossians 1:17). His "goings forth" had been "from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). He took part in the creation of all things (John 1:10), and He upholds all things (Hebrews 1:3). He claimed the right and power to forgive sin (Mark 2:5-10). He is to judge all men (Acts 17:31). There are five recorded instances in His earthly ministry of His power to raise the dead. He has the authority to bestow eternal life (John 10:28). He gives the crown of righteousness to the faithful at the last day (2 Timothy 4:8).

Jehovah spoke to Moses from the burning bush at Mount Horeb and gave His name as "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:2-14). The I AM of the Old Testament was the self-existent Jehovah, or God.

"I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he" (Isaiah 41:4).

The I AM of the Old Testament was revealed in Jesus, in the likeness of man. He said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). And also, "I am the bread which came down from heaven" (verse 41). "I am the living bread" (verse 51). "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). "I am from above" (verse 23). "I am the door" (John 10:9). "I am the good shepherd" (verse 14). "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25). "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). "I am the true vine" (John 15:1).

Over and over we find this name, "I AM."

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Revelation 22:13).

"I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16).

Christ spoke with the consciousness of an eternal Being, to whom time has no effect and for whom it has no limitations. He was and is co-eternal with the Father.

The inspired writer of the book of Hebrews applies to the Son of God the very name of God Himself. Listen as we read the wonderful words:

"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?"

"And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

"And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

"And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands" (Hebrews 1:5-10).

Here God the Father speaks to the Son and calls Him "God" and "Lord." What more do we need? Only one thing—to surrender our hearts in loving obedience to Him and believe in Him as the Saviour and Redeemer of the world, the Creator who hung the stars in space and set the earth in motion with its mighty revolutions, when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy. "The world was made by him" (John 1:10; see also, verse 3).

Yes, the same One who can form worlds through creative power can change the sinner into a saint and bring salvation to the lost. Because of our sins, He came to this world and humbled Himself, becoming a man and dying for us on a cross outside a city wall. No wonder the prophet quotes Him as saying:

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22).

Let us look at Him there upon the cross. Let us accept Him as our Saviour, as our Sacrifice, our Atonement, our Redeemer.

Well, friend, with the evidence before you that we have had time to give, what do you think of Jesus? What do you think of the Messiah? What do you think of the Christ? Is He merely human? Or is He the Son of God?

Suppose we ask the Pharisees of old what they thought of Him. To Him directly, they said:

"Thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:33).

You, Caiaphas, what do you say about Him? "He is a blasphemer because He said:

'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven'" (Matthew 26:64).

Pilate, what is your opinion?

"I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4).

You, Judas, who sold your Master for 30 pieces of silver, what is the confession you made regarding Him?

"I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4).

And you, centurion and soldiers who led Him to the cross, what do you say of Him?

"Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).

And you, demons? "Jesus, thou Son of God" (Matthew 8:29).

John the Baptist, what do you think of Christ?

"Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

And you, John the apostle? He is the "bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16).

The apostle Peter, what do you say of your Master?

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

And you, Thomas?

"My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

The apostle Paul, you who persecuted Him, what testimony do you bear of Him now?

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8).

Now, angels of heaven above, what think ye of Jesus?

"Unto you is born . . . a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

And Thou, O Father in heaven, King of the worlds, who knowest all things, what is thy testimony?

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

And you, friend, What do you think of Christ?

Have faith in God—

The ages He beholds;

Have faith in God—

As prophecy unfolds;

Have faith in God—

The world for good remolds.

Have faith, dear friend, in God.

The Prophecy of Christ and Time

Any fact about Jesus Christ is important. The world counts time and history by His name—B.C., before Christ; and A.D., *anno Domini*, in the year of our Lord.

There are three very important things about any fact: what? when? and where? This is especially true in Bible prophecy. What happened? When did it happen? Where did it happen? Any real prophecy not only predicts the facts regarding an event or person, but makes clear the *what*, *where*, and *when*.

Is there any prophecy in the Old Testament Scriptures regarding Jesus Christ? Yes, many such prophecies, and they have been fulfilled to the letter. Have they been fulfilled also as to place and time? Yes, exactly. Remember, there is a 400-year space of silence between the last book of the Old Testament and the first of the New. The Old Testament prophets wrote of someone who was to come, called the Messiah; or, as interpreted in our language, the Christ. He was to be the Son of God. He was to perform mighty miracles. He was to die for the sins, or iniquity, of all men. He was to take our place. His hands and feet were to be pierced. He was to arise from the dead. But where and when was all this to take place? Opening the Scriptures to Micah's prophecy, we read:

"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).

Notice how many centuries this prophecy was written before Christ was born—at least seven. Seven hundred long years before the cry of that Babe on the starlit night when the angels sang over the hills of Judea and the shepherds were frightened. Seven hundred years passed by, and then the prophecy was fulfilled. The place of the Saviour's birth was foretold 700 years before He was born there. Not in Jerusalem, the capital; not in Rome, the center of imperial power; not in Alexandria, the seat of world trade and philosophy; but in little Bethlehem, a village six miles south of Jerusalem called the City of David, where David once lived. There David's greater Son was born, for Jesus Christ is called "the son of David" (Matthew 1:1). David was a type of Christ, and now type met antitype.

God had told David that of his seed a Redeemer would come. And here He was, born in David's own town. Here are the angel's words spoken to the shepherds:

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

Not only is He Christ, but He is a Saviour, and He is Lord.

The ancient prophecies became even more precise. Two hundred years after Micah's prophecy God spoke through Daniel, the prime minister of a great kingdom, yet an earnest servant and prophet of God. Here is the prophecy as plain and clear as it can be:

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah [that is, the Christ] the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks" (Daniel 9:25).

A score is 20, so three score would be 60. "Threescore and two weeks" plus seven weeks make 69 weeks. These are weeks of years. Each day standing for a year, we have 483 years. An Israelite like Daniel would understand this

at once. Every seventh year was reckoned as a sabbath year (Leviticus 25:4), so the seven plus 62 equal 69 year-weeks. In fact, we are told plainly that in symbolic prophecy a day often stands for a year. In Ezekiel 4:6 we read:

"I have appointed thee each day for a year" (see also Numbers 14:34).

But let us read on in our prophecy of Daniel 9:

"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself" (verse 26).

After speaking of other things that could happen in those days, the prophet says in verse 27:

"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

So here we have three specific statements about the Messiah: 1. He was to come at the end of 69 weeks, "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." 2. After that He was to "be cut off, but not for himself." He was to give His life for others. 3. He would "confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

The sacrifices of the ancient Temple of Israel pointed forward to the Messiah. The offering of the lambs pointed forward to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). When Christ died on the cross, these sacrifices ceased as far as any meaning was concerned. They had pointed forward to Him. He was the great antitype, and when He came the type ceased as far as God was concerned, though men might continue the form.

Now, these 69 weeks are the first part of the 70 weeks that were cut off upon the people of God, as we read in the first words of the 24th verse of Daniel 9. Remember, the people of God had been in captivity in a foreign land for nearly 70 years. The time had come for them to be

restored to their own land, so God moved upon the heart of the great king of Persia, Artaxerxes I (Longimanus), to issue a third and final decree (Ezra 6:14) enabling them to return to Palestine. A copy of his decree to this effect is found in Ezra 7:12-26, which one may read at leisure. Here is the commandment, a decree, to restore and to build Jerusalem—not only to build the city and the Temple, but to restore civil government to the land.

According to the seventh chapter of Ezra, this decree was issued in the seventh year of Artaxerxes' reign. Historical records show that this seventh year of Artaxerxes was 457 B.C. So 457 B.C. became the starting point for the 70 weeks that were cut off for the Jewish people as a nation in Palestine under the rule of God. Sixty-nine weeks of years from this date, according to the prophecy that we have just read, would reach to the appearance of the Messiah. So, not only was He to be born in Bethlehem, but He was to appear as the Messiah 69 weeks of years after 457 B.C. Sixty-nine weeks of seven days each, contain 483 days. Each day symbolizing a year, gives us the definite time period which reaches to the true Messiah.

Many men have come claiming to be the Messiah, or Christ, but according to the prophecy there could be only one true Messiah. He was to be born in a certain town, and we know that it was Bethlehem. He was to appear to do His work at a certain time. When did He appear to do His work as the Messiah? Let us turn to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 3, verses 21 and 22:

"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

"And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."

This was the public announcement that Jesus was God's Son. Here the Holy Spirit came upon Him in anointing for His service. The term *Messiah* means "the

Anointed One." Priests and kings in ancient Israel were anointed before they began their work. That Jesus was so anointed by the Holy Ghost, we read in Acts 10:38:

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."

Notice, Jesus was anointed by the Holy Ghost. This anointing took place at His baptism when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and the voice of God declared Him to be His Son. When was this? We are told that immediately after His baptism, Jesus began to preach, saying:

"The time is fulfilled, . . . repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

The "time" spoken of here as being fulfilled doubtless refers to the 69 weeks, or 483 years, that were to reach to the Saviour's baptism. From the autumn of 457 B.C., when the final decree to rebuild Jerusalem went forth, to the autumn of A.D. 27 is exactly 483 years.

At the very beginning of Luke 3, the chapter that records our Lord's baptism, we read that it was in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar that these things occurred. Tiberius Caesar began to reign conjointly with his father Augustus in A.D. 12, according to historical records. And 12 and 15 equal 27. So it must have been in the year A.D. 27 that the baptism of our Lord took place, exactly fulfilling the prophecy.

The prophecy of Daniel 9 goes on to state that "after threescore and two weeks," or putting it another way, after A.D. 27, "shall the Messiah be cut off" (verse 26). But how long after? We read in the next verse that—

"He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Daniel 9:27).

So far, the 69 weeks, or 483 years, of the 70-week period have been presented. These two periods began at the same time—in 457 B.C. So the week referred to in Daniel 9:27 must be the last week of the 70, the week be-

tween the close of the two periods. This 70th week would begin in A.D. 27 and extend to A.D. 34. So in the middle of the week, when the sacrifice and the oblation were to cease, would be the spring of A.D. 31. This is the date of Christ's crucifixion, when He was "cut off, but not for himself." He died for others. In fact, He died for the sins of the whole world.

It is certainly interesting that this very date was revealed in the Old Testament prophecy. We read that when Jesus appeared to His two disciples on the way to Emmaus after His resurrection—

"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

The disciples felt disappointed in their hope that Jesus was the Messiah. So, from the prophecies He proved that He was the true Messiah; that He had fulfilled, or accomplished, the very work that God had appointed Him to do. Then were His disciples convinced that He was indeed the Messiah. Three years and a half before, He had said that the time was fulfilled (Mark 1:14, 15). Surely this prophecy of Daniel 9 must have been among "the things concerning himself" to which Jesus pointed as evidence that He was the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Through His disciples, the Saviour continued to witness to the chosen nation for three and a half years more, or until A.D. 34, when their testimony was rejected officially and Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was put to death. Then the gospel was to go worldwide, to all the nations.

When Stephen died for the gospel of Christ, a young scholar and leader named Saul was standing by and was deeply impressed by the scene. Soon after this, when Christ appeared to him in person, he was gloriously converted and became the mighty apostle to the nations of the world.

The significance of the shift of Christianity at this time from a mere sect in an obscure land to a world religion with a worldwide vision, can hardly be overestimated. The day of a special nation with a special mission to the world ended, and the times of the gospel church with a mission to the Gentiles, or nations, began.

Let us never forget these four dates: 457 B.C., the final decree to restore and to build Jerusalem; A.D. 27, the appearance of Christ at the Jordan River, where He was baptized by John and anointed by the Holy Ghost when the voice of God declared Him to be His Son; A.D. 31, when He died on the cross at Jerusalem for all men of all lands and of all times; A.D. 34, when the great change came, with the gospel proclamation going to the earth's remotest bounds, to the end of the world, and to the end of time.

This prophecy of Christ and time has convinced thousands and converted them to the faith of Christ, and it will continue to do so as long as probation lasts. Jesus said that many would come, saying, "I am Christ." And they have come, so saying. But the only true Christ, or Messiah, must be born in Bethlehem and enter upon His official work in A.D. 27, and be crucified in A.D. 31. If these things had not been true of Jesus, He would have been a false messiah, a false christ, with no message for the broken, sinful hearts of men.

To you I say earnestly, in the words of Jesus Himself:

"The time is fulfilled [or accomplished], . . . repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Some years ago a leading Christian evangelist was holding a meeting in Sacramento, California, at which the Communion of the Lord's Supper was celebrated. Among those present was an unconverted Japanese who was just learning the English language. Just after the broken bread and the wine had been replaced upon the table, this heathen man arose to his feet in great emotion, and burst out in prayer about as follows:

“O God, I all broke to pieces. I, a poor sinner. For long time, for one whole year, I fight You hard. But here I see Your people eat the bread and drink the wine that show how Jesus He die for sinners. O God, I can fight no more. I all break down. I take Jesus. He be my Saviour now.”

And so He was. That very day, at this man’s earnest request, he was baptized and thus declared his personal faith in Christ.

So there we have it—the glorious *what* and *where* and *when*. What did Jesus do? He came to die for men. Where was He born? In Bethlehem of Judea, as the prophet had predicted. When did He come? At the end of the 483 years that began with the great restoration commandment by King Artaxerxes in 457 B.C., the exact time predicted so many hundreds of years before. The time was fulfilled.

No one has ever been able successfully to refute this great prophecy and its fulfillment. Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah; He was the Christ—or rather, He *is* the Christ. He is alive today. He is alive forevermore. He is able to redeem us all and give us an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of His Father.

Ah, friend, you can depend on the Lord Jesus. He is the Messiah. He is the Christ. He is your Saviour and mine. In the words of the great prophecy, He was “cut off, but not for himself.”

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all.
—Isaac Watts

Have faith in God—
Through fulfilled prophecy;
Have faith in God—
Who sees what is to be;
Have faith in God—
And Christ’s divinity.
Have faith, dear friend, in God.

Stories of Christ's Return, No. 1

There was once a poor peasant living in the mountains of Wales who, month after month, year after year, over a long period of declining life, went every morning as soon as he awakened to an eastern window and looked out to see if Jesus Christ was coming. He was ready to meet his Lord, or he would not have been so anxious and hopeful to see Him. He was willing, or he would rather have looked another way. He loved the Saviour, or his first thought every morning would not have been of Him.

His Master did not come, but His faithful servant died in the faith that He would come. And think of his joy in that wonderful morning of resurrection power when he will see the King in His glory!

All too few Christians today are really looking for the return of Christ to this earth. They seem to forget that Jesus said:

"I will come again" (John 14:3).

He was here once. He fulfilled many prophecies of the Old Testament in coming to this world, being born as a babe in Bethlehem, growing up from childhood into manhood, bringing blessing to thousands by His faithful ministry, preaching the gospel and illustrating it with the wonderful parables, or stories, which He told. Not only before He was crucified, but also after His resurrection, during the 40 days before He ascended to heaven, He declared that He would return to this world of ours (see Matthew 28:18-20; John 21:22, 23).

The parables of Christ are really interesting stories that He used to illustrate the truths He was teaching the

world, and they have been popular and helpful down through the ages. It is interesting to notice that a number of these parables, or divinely inspired stories, deal with our Lord's return. Along with His preaching on this subject, they have stirred the minds and comforted the hearts of those who love the Scriptures. Great Bible interpreters, and great Bible preachers too, have received help from the doctrine of Christ's second coming.

Notice these words from Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, a mighty preacher and Bible student: "To me the second coming is a perpetual light in the path which makes the present bearable. I never lay my head on my pillow without thinking that maybe, before the morning breaks, the final morning may have dawned! I never begin my work without thinking that perhaps He may interrupt my work and begin His own. This is His word to all believing souls, until He comes."

Let us look at two of these great stories—first, the story of the 10 virgins found in Matthew 25:1-13:

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

"And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

"But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

"Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

"But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

"But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

This story ought to stir the hearts of all of us. Notice, it pictures personal preparation for our Lord's return. It reveals that His coming may seemingly be delayed. It proclaims our need of the Holy Spirit to be prepared for Christ's holy advent. In Scripture, oil is often a symbol of the Spirit. The five wise virgins had a supply of oil that the others did not have. In the darkest hour, at midnight, the cry goes forth, "The bridegroom is coming," but the foolish virgins had no oil. Their lamps had gone out, and they were unable to welcome the bridegroom.

What a lesson this is for us at the darkest hour of this world's history. The message of our Lord's return is resounding over all the earth. But only those whose lights are burning, only those whose faith is strong, only those whose lives are filled with hope and trust by the power of the Holy Spirit of God will be ready for that hour. Notice that in the story only those who were ready were allowed to go in to the marriage supper, and when they had gone in the door was shut. Others came and desired entrance, but were not permitted to go in. The door was shut. The great division was made regarding eternal destiny.

This story that Jesus told regarding events connected with His second coming reminds us of an experience that a visitor to India had years ago at a marriage celebration. The bridegroom came from a distance to the home of the bride at Serampore. After the guests had waited two hours, at last near midnight it was announced, as if in the

very words of Scripture, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matthew 25:6).

Everyone now lighted his lamp and ran to find a place in the procession. Some had lost their lamps in the crowd, or had let them go out. There was no oil at hand to refill them. They were unprepared. It was too late for them, so the procession moved on without them to the home of the bride. There the guests entered a large illuminated area in front of the house, covered with an awning. A large company of friends had gathered, dressed in their best apparel, and were seated upon mats on the ground. The bridegroom was carried in the arms of friends and placed in a special seat in the midst of the crowd, where he sat for a short time, then went into the house. Then the door was shut and guarded by armed men.

The person who saw this oriental wedding said that he and others expostulated with the doorkeepers for entrance, but in vain. "Never before," he said, "was I so struck with our Lord's beautiful parable than at that moment."

"And the door was shut." Think of those words seriously, my friend, "The door was shut." It is open now, but someday it will be shut.

Now let us take the second story that Jesus told about His second coming. It is found in Mark 13:32-37:

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."

"For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:"

"Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping."

"And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

In this story the Saviour again emphasizes the fact that He will return. He went away from this earth as a man taking a far journey. He left authority with His servants to do His work here on earth. He gave to every man his particular work, so we are all responsible to work for Him. One of the most important of His commands on leaving was to watch, to be alert, for we do not know when He will return. Therefore we must keep ready all the time. We must not be found sleeping. The great teaching of this wonderful story is that we are to watch for the Master's return. We are to be constantly in expectation. If watching and ready, we shall—

"... see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26).

Dr. Andrew Bonar tells the story of a humble man in one of the Scottish Presbyterian country kirks who had learned this precious doctrine, and it meant much to him. While spending a weekend in Edinburgh, he decided to play the part of a "sermon taster." When he went back to his home village and people asked him how he liked the Edinburgh preachers, he replied: "They all fly on one wing. They all preach the first coming of Christ, but not His second coming."

There are too many preachers flying on one wing today. The prophecies of Jesus' first coming were fulfilled. He came and died for our sins and made salvation possible. The prophecies of His second coming will be fulfilled when He returns to bring immortality to His people at the first resurrection, and take them with Him to the heavenly land. Nothing builds up evangelical warmth, nothing stirs the hearts of God's people to missionary passion for the lost, nothing gives a greater yearning for sanctification of life, as does the realization of the great fact that Christ may return during our lifetime.

Queen Victoria, who sat on the throne of Great Britain for over 60 years, was an earnest Christian. Not only did she love the cross of Christ and His holy atoning sacrifice there for all the people of this world; she also loved the glorious promise of His return to this earth.

On one occasion she heard one of her chaplains preaching at Windsor, describe the second coming of our Lord. In fact, it was the subject of his entire discourse. She was a most attentive listener, and at the close she spoke to the preacher about the topic he had chosen, and said, "Oh, how I wish the Lord might come during my lifetime!"

"Why?" questioned the chaplain. "Why does Your Majesty feel this very earnest desire?"

With quivering lips the queen replied—her countenance lighted with deep emotion—"Oh, I should so love to lay my crown at His feet!"

It seems to me that all Christians should think about our Lord's return, and that, with all that they are through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, they should desire to see Him come and to lay all that they have at His feet and thank Him for what He has done for them. Shouldn't we all feel this way? Should we not read over and over the wonderful promises He made regarding His return to this earth? Should we not be watching, waiting for Him?

How much it adds to life to know that something great is about to happen, to know that someone we love is coming, to know that the time will not go on endlessly for uncounted millions of years, to know that the human race is about to reach the great climax of its history! After the creation of the world, the first great crisis of history was the Flood of Noah. The second was the crucifixion of Christ. The third will be His return in the clouds of heaven, and the inauguration of His kingdom of glory.

My father was a minister for over 60 years and was often away from home for weeks at a time in the service of the Lord. In order to keep my brother and me in school,

Mother stayed with us and kept the little home together. At every opportunity Father would come home. How he loved to be with us! How we loved to have him with us!

We were poor in this world's goods, but we had lots of love in our home. Most of the furniture was made of wooden boxes covered with cloth, for Mother knew just how to do it. I can still see the motto on the wall, which read, "Christ is the Head of this house, the unseen Guest at every meal, the silent Listener to every conversation." It seemed to be sacred to my brother and me. And how we enjoyed family worship, for Father made the Bible so interesting to us by just reading it understandingly. The love of God's Book which his wise reading initiated has not left me to this day.

Sometimes, when Father had been gone for six or eight weeks, Mother would say: "Father is coming home tomorrow. We have a letter from him." He would arrive by train and would have to walk a mile or so, sometimes more, to our humble home. We would wash ourselves so very clean and put on our best clothes. Then we would press our faces against the window and watch for him. "Father is coming! Father will soon be here!" we would say. Then we would see him turn the bend around the hill, carrying his heavy satchels. We could wait no longer, so would be off to meet him, shouting for joy!

Should it not be so regarding our Saviour's return? Should we not be waiting and watching for Him today, pressing our faces against the window of the world, as it were, looking for Him, watching for Him, observing the signs of the times? Then, when that morning comes and the eastern heavens are aglow with the radiant glory of His appearing with all the holy angels, shall we too not rush to meet him? Surely we shall, for we read those holy words of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18:

"The dead in Christ shall rise first:

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Have faith in God—

Someday Christ comes again;

Have faith in God—

The "why" we know, not "when";

Have faith in God—

So walk in hope till then.

Have faith, dear friend, in God.

Stories of Christ's Return, No. 2

Many years ago a father had to leave home and go on a long journey. Just before he left, his little three-year-old son came to him and said, "Daddy, when will you come back?" The father knew that if he should say, "In September," the little one would not understand. However, he realized that he must say something to satisfy the child. So, sitting down beside him, he put his arm around the boy and said: "Now listen, Sonny: When you see the leaves on the trees turning yellow and red and brown and beginning to fall to the ground, you can be sure that Daddy is coming back very soon."

The days and weeks went by. July and August passed along slowly. Every day the little boy would be taken for a walk by his mother or his nurse. On these walks he would talk about his father far away—how he hoped he would come home soon. Slowly the days crept by until finally September came, then mid-September, and the leaves began to turn color, but the boy did not notice it. Then one night there was a big windstorm and millions and millions of leaves were scattered over the town, filling the sidewalks and gutters and swirling in the streets. The next morning when the little fellow went out, he saw the leaves immediately and began to run among them, kicking them in every direction and picking up handfuls and throwing them into the air. Then he began to shout, "Hurrah! Hurrah! Daddy's coming home!"

As before Christ's first advent there was expectation over the world, so it is now. The leaves are turning red.

Some are turning brown. They are beginning to fall. The windstorms of world conflict are upon us. Jesus said:

"When these things begin to come to pass [Be gloomy?—No. Be worried?—No.], then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

The great future for every child of God must be dawning, for the coming of the Lord draws near.

When Jesus was here He not only declared that when we see the signs of the times taking place we may know that His coming is near, as we read in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, but He also told some of His most wonderful parable-stories to illustrate His return to the world and our preparation for it.

One of these stories we find in Luke 12:35-40. It is the story of the watchful servants, and here it is word-for-word. Jesus said:

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

"And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

"And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

"And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

Now notice, friends, that Jesus is speaking to His own people here. He is talking to Christians, and He says that

He will come in an hour when they—Christians—think not. It is very possible that we might build up in our own minds a succession of prophetic events that must take place before the Lord's coming. Our general idea may be correct, but some of these events may take place concurrently, or faster than we expect. In any case, the coming of the Lord will be a tremendous surprise, at least as far as the time of His return is concerned.

The great message of this story that Jesus told is that we must ever be prepared for His sudden return. We must live up to the light that we have, for there is a personal accountability for truth. As we are responsible for the knowledge that God has brought to us through His Word, we are to be like servants waiting for the return of their Master. "Let your loins be girded about"—that was the custom in Bible times of being prepared for work, for doing. "And your lights burning." We must be showing forth the Word of God in our lives and in our teaching. And we are told that if we are watching for His return, we are blessed.

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching" (Luke 12:37).

There is a great reward for such servants of God. They will take part in the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In ancient times the night was divided into watches. We read here:

"And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so [that is, watching], blessed are those servants" (verse 38).

Then the Saviour uses the illustration of an owner of a house who had some reason to believe that there were thieves in the neighborhood. Jesus said:

"If the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

"Be ye therefore ready also" (verses 39, 40).

Great events are impending. The coming of Christ will mean the end of human probation, the setting up of God's kingdom of glory, a tremendous change in the affairs of all of us. Certainly we must be watchful. We ought to be thinking about these things. We ought to be prepared. One thing is certain—we are not prepared to meet the Lord Jesus Christ unless we are His servants, His disciples. What is a disciple of Christ? It is one who hears Him, believes Him, and follows Him. To those who heard Him in His day, Jesus said:

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32).

To be a disciple of Christ, we must continue in His Word—not only hear it and believe it, but continue in it, obey it. It is only then that we can know the truth and find freedom through it. To be a true disciple is to be a true Christian, as we read in Acts 11:26:

"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

The big question now is not, Exactly when is Christ coming?—which, of course, no man knows—but, Am I a Christian? Am I a disciple of Christ? The important thing is to be ready all the time.

John was employed to drive the car of a Christian businessman who had prospered greatly and was also a faithful witness for the Saviour. This man would have talks with his chauffeur about his soul's salvation and the necessity of accepting Christ and being ready for that which lies beyond this life. One day, while he was telling his driver about the blessed hope of the Lord's return, he said, "John, when the Lord comes you can have this car."

"What? Do you mean that?"

"Yes sir, and more than that, you and your wife can have my big house and everything in it."

"Thank you, thank you!" said John fervently.

"Not only so, but you can have all the money and property that I have when the Lord Jesus Christ comes."

Overjoyed, John returned home and told his wife all about it. They were thrilled at the prospect, but did not consider all the implications. They went to bed, but could not sleep. In the middle of the night John got up and went over to the home of his employer and knocked loudly on the door.

Finally his friend came down and asked: "Who is it? What do you want?"

"I am John, your driver."

"What's the matter, John? Why do you come at this time of night, and awaken me?"

"O sir, I don't want your car."

"Don't want my car, John? Why not?"

"Nor your house, nor your money, nor your property."

"Well then, John, what is it that you do want?"

"I want to be saved. I want to be ready as you are for the coming of the Lord."

John was right. To be ready is the important thing, and that is what this story that Jesus told was designed to teach.

Now let us take another of Jesus' wonderful stories about His return to this world. We find it in Matthew 20:1-16. We shall not read it all, but, in brief, the story is this: A certain man who owned a vineyard went out in the morning to hire men to work for him that day. He found a number of laborers, and they agreed to work for a certain amount, which was the regular daily wage at that time.

And again at the third hour he went out and found other men idle, so hired them with the assurance that he would pay them what was right. Also at the sixth and ninth hours he hired still more workers. Then about the 11th hour he went out and hired still others with the same assurance. At the close of the day, when the laborers came in to get their wages, all were paid the same.

Those who had worked all day complained because those who had worked only one hour received the same pay as they. Then the employer reminded them that they had agreed to work for that amount, and were happy for the opportunity. He said:

"Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?"

"Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee."

"Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?"

"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:13-16).

This shows us that while we face the great decisions of eternity at the second coming of Christ, God measures our service by the willingness and fidelity with which it is rendered. It is not the amount of work that we do, nor the many years that we put in, compared with the fewer years. The rewards of faithful service are based on the Lord's gracious generosity and the spirit which motivates our service for Him.

The close of earth's day is about here. The night of all human endeavor will soon come. Our salvation is not of works, but there will be a reward for all the true children of God, based upon the faithful service that they have rendered to Him. One thing, and the important thing, that all true believers receive from the gracious hand of God is eternal life. Some, like the dying thief, turn to God only a short time before death ends all their obedience to Him. Others live long lives of service. But all will stand before God saved by grace, not by their deeds.

Now, this word is to you, Christian friend: What sort of service do you render to Christ now? How does your life witness for Him? Do you truly render to the Lord the best that you have—a life consecrated to Him and filled with the Holy Spirit? We must all leave the reward of our

labors in the hands of the God of all righteousness, all mercy, and all love. Let us go forward faithfully in His service here, knowing that He will take care of us in the great world of the future. Remember what Jesus said, as recorded in John 14:3:

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself [notice—receive you, take you, unto myself]; that where I am, there ye may be also."

It is when Jesus comes again that we are received by Him. It is only when He returns that we shall be with Him. He must come back, or we shall never be with Him.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven [says the apostle Paul] with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

It is those who are in Christ, those who are living here and now in the power of His Holy Spirit, those who are looking for Him to come, waiting for Him to come, and are ready for Him to come, who will be taken with Him when He does come. Our preparation to meet Him must be made every day by the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, by direct prayer to God, by feeding upon His Holy Word, and by serving Him in our contacts with others.

An atheist lecturer in Britain once gave an address in which he thought he had demolished all the arguments for the Scriptures, for Christ, and for Christianity. He wound up by saying, "Now I hope that I have succeeded in explaining to you that the existence of Jesus Christ is a myth."

When he had finished, a miner who had come to the lecture in his grimy clothes, stood up and said: "Sir, I am only a working man and don't know what you mean by the

word 'myth.' But can you explain *me*? Three years ago I had a miserable home. I left my wife and children in rags and tatters, without enough food. I cursed and swore. I drank up all my wages. Then someone came along and showed me the love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ. Now everything is different. I have given up drink. We have a happy home, and my wife and children smile and laugh. I feel better in every way. A new power has taken possession of me since Christ came into my life. Sir, can you explain *me*?"

Of course the atheist could not, without giving up his skepticism and unbelief. In fact, nobody can truly explain the change that comes into the life of a Christian unless he has experienced it himself.

My friend, Christ can help you—and He will—if you will let Him. May God bless you, every one.

Have faith in God—
 Till advent glory burns;
Have faith in God—
 For Christ the pilgrim yearns;
Have faith in God—
 And He returns! returns!
Have faith, dear friend, in God.

A Fool's Bargain

The young man was out of breath, for he had come running to meet the Great Teacher. He had wanted to speak to Jesus for some time, and when he finally found the opportunity he came quickly. This man had youth, and with it riches, honor, ease, distinction, and influence. He was prominent in business and social circles of the city. His every ambition seemed to have been realized. Life held every promise of fulfillment, yet it seems that something was lacking, for he asked the Master:

"What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17).

Jesus asked the young man some questions about his life. The answers that came were frank and straightforward. He told the Lord that from his youth he had observed the commandments of God. He was eager. He wanted to know what he must do to have eternal life.

"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21).

But this invitation was not accepted. The Bible says:

"He was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions" (verse 22).

In the parallel passages in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, we read that the young ruler went away sorrowful. He refused to make Christ Master, or *Kurios* in the Greek, which means "Lord." That word "sorrowful" is suggestive of the Scottish phrase, "into the gloaming." Actually it was sunset in that young man's life, when it

should have been the dawning. He was not willing to include Christ in his plans for the future. He had all of the supposed necessities of life, and even more. He had wealth; he had social standing; he was a ruler among his people. Yet he realized that Jesus had something that he did not have.

It is interesting to note that Jesus did not possess the things of life that many today think are so important. He was without wealth; He was without possessions; He was without worldly advantage. Yet wherever He went, the crowds followed Him, for He had life—He was the Life.

In teaching His disciples, Christ spoke of people who are not willing to plan for the future, whose only concern is for this life—“fools” they are called. You will remember Christ’s parable of the rich man who had much land that produced such heavy crops that he debated what he should do with the abundance of the harvest. Finally he decided to pull down his granaries and build larger ones, where he could store all his produce and goods. Then he would say to his soul:

“Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (Luke 12:19, 20).

God called this prosperous man a fool. Now, at first thought, this seems strange to us. Certainly this farmer should have the privilege of enjoying the bounty of his harvest. He was very careful in his farming procedures and was a good businessman besides. He knew how to market his crops to good advantage, and as a result he became rich.

There is no hint of dishonesty or shady dealings on the part of this man. He had gained his riches honestly, and no doubt he was a respected member of the community in which he lived. As far as we are told, he was a good,

respectable, moral man. But still God called him a fool. Now, why did God call this intelligent, industrious, and successful farmer a fool? I believe our first clue is found in Luke 12:19, where the rich man said:

“I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”

This man was a fool because he planned only for this present life. He had made wise provision for everything except his soul. He was honest with everyone but God. The material things of this life were his only concern. His thinking was crowded with things—the crops, the cattle, the barns, the markets, the farm prices—everything but God.

Friend, today God is asking you—He is asking me—this searching question:

“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

“Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36, 37).

As we look about us in our modern world we see people who are prosperous indeed. They have everything that the human heart could desire. They have the new “this” and the new “that.” Their business associates call them successful and brilliant, but God calls them fools because they have no time for eternal things.

The story is told of an ancient king who gave his court jester a beautiful ring as a token of his appreciation. On presenting it, the king said, “Keep this ring until you find a greater fool than yourself, then give it to him.”

Years went by, and one day the king became very ill. In fact, he was at the point of death. He called for his jester who, upon his arrival, asked, “O king, what is the trouble with you?”

The monarch replied, “I am soon going on a long journey.”

“When will you return?”

The king answered, “I will never return.”

“Sir,” the jester asked anxiously, “have you made preparation for the journey?”

After a few moments’ silence, the answer came sadly, “Alas, I have not!”

Incredulously the court fool looked at the dying monarch. Then, slipping the ring from his own finger, he placed it in the king’s hand and said: “Here, sir, take this, for surely anyone who would go on such a journey without preparation is a greater fool than I.”

God is inviting you to include Him in your plans and in your life. Life does not consist in the abundance of the things that we possess (Luke 12:15). Without God one cannot enjoy life; he does not know the meaning of life. He may buy paintings and beautiful statuary or spend his money for other luxuries, but so far as true enjoyment is concerned, they might as well be dry goods. One cannot appreciate life, one does not know what life is all about, without the Lord Jesus Christ; but with Him, life takes on meaning and is found to be qualitative instead of quantitative.

Two men were passing a beautiful estate when one of them asked, “How much do you think that place is worth?”

“I don’t know,” was the reply, “but I know how much it cost the owner.”

“How much was that?”

“It cost him his soul.”

What would it profit you if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? Have you ever thought of this?

I remember reading of two factory workers who had contracted an industrial disease of the lungs. The doctors gave them about six months to live, and each received \$5,000 compensation.

What would you do in such a case? Would you spend the money in traveling around the world? In having a good time? Would you spend it on drink? Would you sell your soul in a fool’s bargain? Or would you spend those six months getting ready for eternal life? “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:37).

King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, tried to find the real meaning of life, and settled for a fool’s bargain. He tried to find happiness and security in the attainment of knowledge. He said:

“I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge” (Ecclesiastes 1:16).

Solomon was wise and did obtain great knowledge. He wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 psalms. He spoke of trees and plants, from the cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop that springs from the wall. He studied about beasts and fowls and fishes (I Kings 4:32, 33). His wisdom was as the sands of the seashore. He was wiser than all the magicians, soothsayers, and wise men of the East. Yet, this did not give him satisfaction. His response was:

“I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

“For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Ecclesiastes 1:17, 18).

In the modern day in which we live we have come under a veritable cloudburst of knowledge. Scientific achievement has blossomed. Many have made science their god, and, with this pagan deity in control, unsanctified man is about to destroy himself with his knowledge. Knowledge alone is not the key to happiness and real life.

Then Solomon tried pleasure. We read:

"I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 2:1).

Put in our modern language, he was saying: "Let's release inhibitions, dispense with prohibitions. Let's unlock the portals of pleasure. Let's have fun. Let's have freedom. Let's forget morals and Christian standards, and just have a good time." But this is what the wise man found:

"Behold, this also is vanity.

"I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?" (verses 1, 2).

He tried to find fulfillment and happiness in self-indulgence.

"I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, . . . till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life" (verse 3).

He was wearied with the acquisition of knowledge and was satiated with worldly pleasure, so he turned to the tavern—to alcohol. But he found that for every trouble that was drowned, two more bubbled to the surface. He discovered that he could not escape the effects of the babbling mouth, the red eyes, the wounds and bruises, the despairing family, and he said:

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

Then he indulged desire and passion—married for beauty, lust, and political power rather than for love. He preached much, but practiced little. He dispensed wisdom and embraced folly.

He acquired wealth. He gathered "silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces" (Ecclesiastes 2:8). His wealth was unrivaled. The ships of his navy returned from each trip with 12 million in the gold of Ophir, as well as silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks, with

"great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones" (1 Kings 10:11). It has been said that when the Queen of Sheba visited him, she left three and a half million dollars in gold alone. His annual gold revenue was 18 million dollars. But even this did not satisfy him. He said:

"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

Solomon was trying to settle for a fool's bargain, but he finally came to himself. As a result of his observations and his experiences, he declared:

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).

I think also of another great man who was offered a fool's bargain. Moses was offered the throne of Egypt, great political power, and worldly prestige. Paul tells about it in Hebrews 11:24-27:

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

Thank God for such a decision. He was offered worldly fame, power, and riches. He was offered the throne of the world's then strongest and greatest kingdom. But he turned it all down and said, No! He chose rather to take his stand with the people of God, those who believed in the principles of righteousness. No doubt he was ridiculed and

mocked by those in the court of Egypt. But Moses wanted to follow God, so he turned down a throne to join God's people, and another man took his place.

I shall never forget my visit to the Cairo Museum. There were the mummified forms of the ancient Pharaohs, men who chose the world instead of God. And there he was, lying right in front of me—Ramses II, the Pharaoh who many think was ruling over Egypt in the time of Moses.

Is it worth it—to gain the whole world and lose one's soul? The rich man, mentioned previously, handled his business affairs very carefully, but he failed to reckon with one great fact that every man must face—death closes all accounts. We have so many heartbeats, and that is all. When we die we can take nothing with us.

"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither" (Job 1:21).

When the moment after death comes to the world's richest man, he has no more than a miserable beggar. Riches cannot purchase peace or comfort beyond the grave. An old Italian proverb reminds us that "our last robe is made without pockets." And Jesus declares that whoever disregards this solemn truth is a fool.

God told that rich man, "Thy soul shall be required of thee" (Luke 12:20). That was an awful sentence to be pronounced upon a man who was just preparing to live, who was planning to "eat, drink and be merry." But his plans were interrupted.

Today the Lord Jesus invites you and me to decide for Him, to reject the fool's bargain. He says:

"Come now, and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18).

Being a Christian is a reasonable thing. Following Jesus in all that we know to be truth is a reasonable thing. It is foolish to do otherwise. God wants us to prepare now for eternity. Will you not include Christ in your plans today?

Once to every man and nation
Comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood,
For the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
Offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand,
And the sheep upon the right.
And the choice goes by forever
'Twixt that darkness and that light.

Careless seems the great Avenger;
History's pages but record
One death grapple in the darkness
'Twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch over His own.
—James Russell Lowell

Have faith in God—
Nor from His Word depart;
Have faith in God—
By faith, His child thou art;
Have faith in God—
No idol in thy heart.
Have faith, dear friend, in God.