

THE BAPTIST HOUR

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What A Saviour!

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WHAT A SAVIOUR!

Lloyd Douglas has an interesting passage in his book, The Robe, about the little boy, Jonathan, who has just given away his prize donkey. Marcellus, the Roman, gave the donkey to the boy only the day before; but now, just one day later, though the boy was as happy over receiving the donkey as any boy of his age would be, nevertheless, here he is, a seven-year-old boy, giving his donkey away. And Marcellus begins to think about that, and this is the conclusion to which he comes: "That Jesus must have been a man of gigantic moral power. He has been dead and in his grave for a year now, but he has stamped himself so indelibly onto the house of Justus that even this child has been marked! ... It is as if this Jesus had taken a die and hammer — and had pounded the image of his spirit into this Galilean gold, converting it into the coins of his kingdom! The man should have lived. He should have been given a chance to impress more people! A spirit like that — if it contrived to get itself going — could make the world over into a fit habitation for men of good will!"

Now that's an interesting thing. The novelist becomes a preacher. For, actually, that is what has happened again and again. "It is as if this Jesus had taken a die and hammer and had pounded the image of his spirit into this Galilean gold, converting it into the coins of his kingdom."

Jesus, the Man

What about a person like that! Well, the first thing that I wish to say is this: Jesus Christ was a man. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." That is true or it is not true. I believe that it is true. "It behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren." I believe that. He was "in all points, tempted like as we are." I believe that. These words and others that might be quoted are either true or not true. I believe that Jesus was truly

man. He became hungry and thirsty and tired and weary. He was born of a woman; He worked as a carpenter; He walked as an itinerant preacher; He sailed as a seaman; He prayed as a son of man. He became angry; He was amazed; He suffered; He was a man.

Now that is everlastingly important. When people were accused of heresy, as recorded in early history, frequently this was the point of the trouble -- not that the people doubted Christ's deity, but that they doubted His humanity. It was not that they did not believe that He was God; they did not believe that He was man; and men have been tried again and again and condemned for that doubt. They did not believe in His manhood. They did believe in His divinity. Doubt His divinity, believe that He is only a man, and you make it impossible for Him through His authority and power to redeem you. Doubt His humanity, and there is a gap between you and God that could not be bridged before He came "in the flesh" and could not be bridged now were it not for His sojourn in the flesh. The effect is the same whether you believe only and solely in His humanity or only and solely in His divinity. Neither is sufficient; it is not an "either-or," but a "both-and."

Jesus, A Very God

He is God. I quoted a verse a moment ago in favor of my belief that He was man; may I quote the same verse in favor of my belief that He is God? "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." "The Word became flesh"-- I was saying to you a moment ago; may I remind you now that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God -- it is through Him that we have remission of sins. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed..." This Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, your Redeemer and mine. Therefore, some-

how He is the contemporary of every people of every age in the world, for all have needed a redeemer.

Listen to these lovely words of George Matheson, the blind preacher of Scotland: "Son of man, whenever I doubt of life, I think of Thee. Nothing is so impossible as that Thou shouldst be dead. I can imagine the hills to dissolve in vapor and the rivers to empty themselves in sheer exhaustion, but I feel no limit in Thee. Thou never growest old to me. Last century is old, last year is an obsolete fashion, but Thou art not obsolete. Thou art abreast of all the centuries. I have never come up to Thee, modern as I am." That has been the feeling of the peoples across the centuries as they have come to Him. This Jesus Christ, your Lord and mine—He is our Saviour and our Redeemer.

A beautiful Christmas carol has come into our knowledge in the last few years. It was discovered in the mountains of western North Carolina. An author was visiting in Murphy in 1933 when he heard a mountain girl singing some hauntingly beautiful words; he asked her to sing them over for him; he jotted them down on a piece of paper. Later he captured the idea with reworked words, and now the poem is fast becoming one of our best-loved Christmas carols.

I wonder as I wander, out under
the sky,
How Jesus the Saviour did come
for to die,
For poor ornery people like you
and like I,
I wonder as I wander, out under
the sky.

John Jacob Niles

This plaintive, beautiful, homely setting portrays the things we feel. We do wonder as we wander out under the sky, how Jesus our Saviour should come forth for to die, for poor ornery sinners like you and me. Why and how did He do it? We do not know, we cannot tell, we shall never know fully. I think the following words enter into it, however.

Through Jesus Christ, God has given you and me a perfect example. Now that is far from being enough, but that is everlastingly important. I want more than someone to tell me what I ought to do, I want to see somebody demonstrate it; and in the coming of Jesus, God has said once and for all, "If you want to know what man was meant to be and do, look at My Son; here He is, your perfect example." If I want to know what my motive for living should be, I can look at Christ. If I want to know what the goal and end of life should be, I can look at Him and see it. If I want to know the real sense of values in life and be able to weigh what is vital, I can look at Christ, the perfect example. If I want to know what my attitude toward peoples of all races should be, then I have the pattern in Christ Jesus.

Jesus, the Victorious

He is, of course, more than a perfect example. In Jesus Christ, God spoke a word of victory for all your problems and mine. Now those early disciples really believed that. I think if they were to come into our services and see how calm and placid, how matter-of-fact we are, they would be utterly amazed. If they were to see how you and I go about with stooped shoulders and dragging feet and tired spirits, they would be unable to understand it. They would say, "Why, what do you mean, defeated? Why, that's victory! We take that as our sign and our symbol, and it is in the power of this cross that we conquer!"

You remember that story about the little girl coming into the church with her father, and looking back of the pulpit and seeing the cross, she said, "Daddy, who put that plus sign up there?" That is it! The cross is a plus sign, it is what God has added to your life and mine to make it victorious! And the resurrection meant victory over sin; it meant that nothing in this world could ultimately defeat a child of God. I believe Jesus Christ has done that for us.

He has done more, and in His death, particularly, He has done it. That is, God has shown through Jesus Christ the terribleness of sin — not only His victory over it, but He has shown it for what it really is.

Now, for many of us, the thing that we need most — let's put it differently — the thing we need first is not forgiveness, but a knowledge that we need forgiveness; for many of us do not believe we have any sins to be forgiven of. It is amazing as we talk to some people and hear them justify themselves — it really is. And in the cross of Christ, God said: "Look! These are the best men you've got. They are your religious leaders. They are the people you depend upon, they are conscientious, they are patriotic, they are God-fearing — and look what they have done! That is what sin will do."

Again Jesus Christ has shown the suffering love of God for broken mankind. Here He shows His love for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; here we see that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. We see in that play, Green Pastures, after all His wrath and thunderbolts, it is through suffering love that God says, "If you want to know what My real, true nature is, here it is, here it is." And it would appear that, as we behold this, if there is an ounce of decency or dignity in us, we would cry out that such amazing love, such divine love demands our strength, our life, and our all, and that from this day forth and forever we would be fully and completely His!

Jesus, Giver of Life

Through Him God's grace and God's power and God's presence are immediately available for every child of His. There is no longer a wall of partition separating us from God's presence. On that dark and blazing day when the Lord Christ went to the cross for us, the curtain of the Temple that was the symbol of separation from God was torn apart. And when the inspired writers came to

record that incident, they remembered that it was torn from the top to the bottom, not from the bottom to the top. Conceivably, man might have done the latter, but they were sure that only God could do the former. Thinking about it, they were convinced that it was as if the giant hands had grasped that curtain at the top and with one mighty fling of the arms had torn it to the very bottom — saying thereby that now all might come to the mercy seat! All? Yes! All might come — sinning Simon, thunderous John, doubting Thomas, grasping Zaccheus, shameful Magdalene, the penitent thief, and last and least of all, you and I.

Through Christ, God has done something that can change man's status before God. As to just what that is and just how it is achieved, one may not be dogmatic. Humility sits well upon the heart of the man here. We know in part and we prophesy in part. We see through a glass darkly. But we see and we hear and we feel and we believe. Listen: "He shall save his people from their sins," and "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"; and again, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Hear it! "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." And surely what the Spirit is trying to say, not only to the churches, but to poor broken, wayward hearts like ours, is that God was doing something out there on that hillside that day that man could not do for himself. In His great love wherewith He loved us, He was doing something that would change man's status before the holy, loving, majestic throne of God.



This sermon leaflet is free. However, if you wish to share in the cost of printing and distribution our address is: THE BAPTIST HOUR, P. O. Box 12157, Fort Worth 16, Texas.

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