

*76 Sermons on the
Old Testament of the Bible
by Jesus of Nazareth*

through
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SERMON 1

Received July 16, 1957.

THE WAY TO IMMORTALITY.

I am here, Jesus.

Yes, I am here in response to your request that I write you a sermon for those people who may be interested in learning more about the Gospel which I really preached when on earth—a Gospel designed to show man the Way to immortality through possession of the Father's Love through prayer and the resultant transformation of man's soul from a human soul to one possessed of the Essence of God and hence divine.

Yes, that was my mission when I was on earth and that was the great message which my Father in Heaven sent me to preach to the Jews and to all mankind, and it is the message which I have been, and I am still, endeavoring to bring to mankind over the long centuries from that time until the present, so that the clouds which have appeared through human incomprehension of my work and mission can be at last cleared away and mankind can see exactly what I preached when I appeared on earth and what the exact Way is which man can follow for his becoming at-one with the Father in His Divine Love and Mercy, and thus enable him to achieve that immortality of soul which he so much and so eagerly seeks and yet which seemingly evades his grasp and his frustrated yearnings.

And in these sermons I wish to state that what I have written through Mr. Padgett is correct and that the true and only Way to the Father and His Love was explained in the messages which I and the many high spirits associated with me in the writing of these messages were able to transmit to mankind through him.

So that in this first sermon we come to the questions: Why is it that the churches fail to turn man to the Father's Love, and what is necessary for religious leaders to do to bring about the realization that God's Love is available, and that it is the possession of His Love in the soul of man that effects its transformation into a soul filled with His Essence and possessed, and aware, of its immortality?

For I wish to show in this first sermon why it is important for mankind, regardless of religious affiliations or background, to hearken unto the voice of the Master and to obtain that immortality which God the Father is eager to bestow upon whosoever shall turn to Him in Love and Prayer, and which the trappings and misconceptions of the present churches make so difficult and uncertain for the very congregations they serve and seek to guide. For the churches of today, built as they are upon the speculations of men who could not comprehend my message and who worked out false doctrines based on the false notion of my deity as part of a supposed trinity, cannot show the Way to the Father and His Love because they have no conception of the Father and His Love that will lead man to seek and obtain that Love and the subsequent transformation of the soul from the human to the divine.

The churches of today cannot inspire man to seek God's Love because they no longer understand, and they have not for long centuries so understood it, that God's Love possessed by

the human soul through prayer to Him for its coming is the Way and the only Way to man's salvation.

These churches emphasize the moral order of society very much as did Moses when the conception of the Ten Commandments for man's conduct was developed and brought into operation, and the moral order, as I have many times explained, has merely the force of purifying man's human soul and bringing it into harmony with God's Laws, but does not have the power of bringing about the transformation of the soul, no matter how purified, into a divine soul filled with God's Love and Mercy.

No obedience to any moral code, I repeat, nor, for that matter, any magical effect of anyone's blood, whether he be in physical life or was at one time a mortal and now a spirit, can cause the soul to be transformed into a divine soul, for only God's Love conveyed into the human soul through the Holy Spirit in response to earnest prayer can bring about such a transformation—and no church as it is constituted today teaches that great fact—and this is the real message which I taught as the appointed Messiah of God. And it is for this reason, I must repeat, that the Way to the Father and immortality lies not with the churches nor with their doctrine of moral behavior or the efficacy of Jesus' blood or mere belief in my name or in any religious concept which is now taught by the priests and pastors of these same churches.

The Way to the Father, let me emphasize it again, is only as I taught it on earth, as I explain it now, and as I have explained it in the messages which I have written through Mr. Padgett. This sermon is clear in showing that the churches do not possess the knowledge of bringing mankind into At-Onement with the Father. That is why mankind must be given the True Gospel and the Way shown to them. Religious leaders in the world today must follow me in my teachings and carry on my work and awaken mankind to this fundamental Truth: that we may all be One in God's Divine Love through prayer, and this by all and every means now available that will help bring the Word to all flesh. And it is through the teachings of the Truth by you, my disciples and workers everywhere in this new age, that my true church can and will flourish from henceforth on earth.

I think I have written enough on the cardinal points treated in this sermon and I shall continue to write and show those interested that the Truth is at last being given—first through the messages and now through my Church of the New Birth, which shall teach the Way to the Father and His Love as did Jesus the Messiah when he was an earth.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 2
Received August 24, 1957.

CHRISTIANITY'S FAILURE TO PREACH THE FATHER'S LOVE.

I am here, Jesus.

I have been waiting to write you another sermon on the Father's Love and His eagerness that mankind should receive His Love and become His immortal children through prayer to Him; and I also wish to continue with the reasons why the churches are not in possession of this great Truth.

Now I do not wish to say anything that might be construed as derogatory to the fine basic religious practices, like community help, charity, social welfare and moral instruction, which the churches are doing as forces helping to bring man into harmony with God's Laws through obedience to the moral and ethical codes, like the Decalogue of Moses, above all, or its equivalents developed and practiced in Eastern churches.

For moral and ethical religion was the only kind of religion known to these churches of the East and to Judaism before my coming, and the fact is that Christianity, in all its branches and ramifications, is simply perpetuating that type of religion—one of moral and ethical living—with a positive pagan admixture which blasphemously elevates my personality to a nonexistent second part of the Godhead, and with no comprehension that I came not to purify souls through the moral and ethical principles, as did Moses, and which I merely confirmed as God-given Laws, but that, as the Messiah of God, I came to make available to mankind, through prayer to the Father for its transformation, a soul not only purified of sin, but a divine soul, made so by the constant flowing into it of the Father's Divine Love, incapable of sin, impervious to temptation and no longer in need of the Ten Commandments of Moses or the other moral and ethical codes of the other religions.

This Divine Love, the loving gift of the Father to whosoever seeks it earnestly in prayer, is carried into the soul by the Holy Spirit, which is not the so-called third person of the trinity, nor even the Spirit of God of the Old Testament, as the churches preach, but that Energy of God designated to perform this delicate mission, and is that which the Christians erroneously call and preach as God's Grace which fulfills the law. For it is not the Holy Spirit which fulfills the law, but the Father's Love, and it is this Love and not the Holy Spirit which is in reality the Grace which pervades the soul.

And this state of Grace, if I may use the term, is not a fixed or static condition, due to belief in my name and partaking in the man-made rite of the mass and its pagan origins, or because of any vicarious atonement effected by my crucifixion—as preached by the churches—but is a continuous process in soul transformation into Divine Essence through constant and earnest prayer to the Father for His Love, in this world and in the next, throughout all the eternity of time.

This message of eternal life through the Gift of God's Divine Love was the message which, as the Messiah of God, I taught to the Hebrews and to all mankind when on earth and represents the only Way to achieve immortality of soul, through At-Onement with God.

I wish to emphasize and repeat, that it be well understood, that this Love is not the human love which man has or may have for his fellowman and for God, a distinction which is not understood by the churches, for they believe that love is universally identical, and that I loved, and that God loves, mankind with the same love which man has for God and his fellowman. This is not true, for abundance of love for one's neighbor is simply an abundance of the human love with which God provided man at his creation; but God's Love for His children is Divine, and it can come only into the human soul by prayer to the Father for its inflow, and it is in this Way that the process of transformation into the divine soul by the Father's Love takes place.

The potentiality of receiving the Father's Love, which Love has never been a part of man originally, but which was, nevertheless, available at man's creation, was lost by the first human parents with their Fall; and it remained lost until it was made available to mankind again with my coming. For it was as a human being, possessed of a soul filled with the Father's Divine Love, meaning a soul divine and one with the Father's Essence, that I was the Father's first and only begotten son at the time and was, and am, in that way the Messiah. I was born of the Holy Spirit in that, as I have said, it was this Energy of God that brings, and brought the Father's Love into my soul, and into the soul of whosoever seeks His Love through earnest prayer. As a human being, I was born, as are all humans born in the same way, of my parents, Mary and Joseph, and in no such mysterious and metaphysical manner as taught by the churches. So that here again, the churches neither understand who I was, nor am, have me born of a virgin in violation of God's Law of Reproduction and have no understanding of the Father's Love and how, by prayer, it enables mankind to achieve that salvation unto eternal life for which the soul of man is yearning.

I shall stop now, for I have said what I had intended to for this second sermon, but there are many other things that I wish to write concerning the failure of the churches to preach the glad tidings of the Father's Love; and I shall come again to continue these messages. So let me urge all those to whom these sermons may come to have faith in His Love and Mercy, and to pray with their whole soul for the inflow of the Father's Love, and to make known that the true Gospel of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, is being revealed anew to mankind.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 3

Received August 25, 1957.

THE LACK OF THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD IN CHRISTIANITY TODAY.

I am here, Jesus.

I wish to go into further detail concerning the message of the Father's Love and its availability to all mankind through prayer to Him for its inflow, and the reasons why the churches as they are constituted today do not possess the message of the "glad tidings of immortality," as I preached it when I made my appearance on earth as the Messiah of God.

Let me repeat that the Christian concept of a divine trinity is merely a human fabrication and no man is baptized by the Holy Spirit in the sense that it is taught by the churches.

The whole message of my ministry while I was on earth, the glad tidings that the Father's Divine Love was available to the human soul and that it is this Love that transforms the human soul into a divine soul and thus enables mankind to achieve immortality, has been misconstrued into a love that is human and subject to defilement. And the will of the Father, that man should be made one with Him in His Love, has not been carried out and is not being taught by the churches. But I wish to declare unto you with all the authority that I possess that God is not mocked, and that His Will must and shall eventually prevail, and it shall be as men, themselves, come to the Father for that Love and are thereby transformed into His true children in free will and love, and in the soul understanding of the Truths that these sermons and others to follow point the Way to Him.

The Love, then, that is now the concern of the churches which claim Christianity, is not that Divine Love which I came to make known and available to the Jews and to all mankind, but is that love which is human only and which was given to humankind with the implanting of the human soul into the living being called man. That soul was created in the image of God, and not His Essence, so that, regardless of what the churches teach, the soul of man is not divine, and man cannot look within himself to develop any so-called divine spark, for there is none. But he may simply develop the human soul qualities that he already possesses, and his human love for his fellowman and his human love for God, as Moses had already taught.

It is for this reason that the churches, whether they will it or not, have continued to regard the Ten Commandments as the moral code by which Christians are to live by; for while they teach my shed blood redeems the faithful of their sins, yet they realize that good church-goers as well as all mankind continue to sin, and that this love that Jesus supposedly has for them does not prevent them from sinning, and that it is only by obedience to the Ten Commandments, with encouragement and exhortations from the priests, and the threats of an everlasting hell of brimstone and fire, that the faithful are able to make progress in their sincere struggles against temptations and the wrongful indulgence of their material desires.

In their prayer to God, therefore, they seek His Aid that their souls be purified of sin, and indeed, God does aid the sincere penitent by sending His ministers to strengthen the human will in those persons who seek that aid; nevertheless, the problem for the Christian faithful continues

to be the problem of sin, and the efforts of the human will to eliminate the sinful tendencies to which their souls are prone, and also to ward off the new temptations with which their flesh is contending. And as they sin, those that sincerely repent and turn in prayer to God find that they are indeed relieved for, strange as it may appear, the penitent soul is no longer the same soul that sinned, in that its condition is different and is cleansed of that sin; but that cleansed condition is subject to the temptations of the earth plane, and with but its human will and desire not to sin because of sincere human love of me or, as they think, God, and because of fear of what they think may be God's wrath and purgatory, if not eternal hell, they attempt not to sin and may be temporarily successful, but are dismayed to find that despite their beliefs that theirs is the way to God, they sooner or later succumb to the evils that cling fast to their souls, and they sin again, and this process continues repeatedly and with little abatement in their lives; and the only consolation which the sincere Christian may have is the feeling that he is gaining to an extent in the constant warfare against sin, as his will continues to be strengthened and his increased love for his Deity combine to lessen to that extent his desires to sin.

And thus he finds that the grace, or his baptism by the Holy Spirit, or Jesus' love and redeeming sacrifice of which he is supposedly the recipient by virtue of his faith in Jesus' name, has not purified him of sin, and thus had not really fulfilled the law, for he must continue to live by God's laws in order not to sin. For he knows that if the Commandments were given by God that he should not sin, then Christ's supposed sacrifice was also made that he should not sin and the Holy Spirit which he believes to be within him should have been the power which protected him against the desires to sin and make him free of sin. For Paul taught in Romans II: 14 - 15 that Christians can do by nature the things contained in the law, and this has not come to pass. And so the sincere churchman finds that his grace, as the churches so preach it, has not fulfilled the law, which he must continue to obey; and he must find his consolation in the thought that, as he has been taught, Jesus' blood will cover his sins. Yet if that is so, then Christianity degenerates into a religion wherein mankind may continue to violate God's Laws, in that Jesus' blood will cover the sins of those who believe in his name, and that God can accept into His Holy house a soul laden with sin and evil merely because of faith in that name.

Hence, Christians, and all mankind, must understand that neither Jesus' nor anyone else's blood, has the power to wash away the sins that each one has committed; and that a soul is purified only to the extent that it is obedient unto the Laws of God. Christians must also understand that the "grace" they have been taught is theirs as a result of faith in God, or in Jesus as the so-called second person of the trinity, is not the True Grace—the Father's Love—that comes to man only by prayer to the Father for it, and that it is only a purification of their own human love without that sure power to eliminate sin as does the Divine Love which not merely purifies the human soul but transforms it into a divine soul. And this is the reason why Christians, despite their clinging to the so-called vicarious atonement, are so much concerned with moral backsliding—sinning after they have been told they have won salvation through belief in Jesus' name—and that is why the Catholics have their "purgatory", the purification of the soul after the material death, after they have been taught that Jesus' blood has redeemed them from sin. And that is why as I have said, Christianity today is, regardless of the preaching of the priests and pastors, merely a religion identical with Judaism, placing its ultimate reliance upon the Ten Commandments of Moses for human soul purification, without the power of the New Heart which I came to bring to the Jews and to all mankind, and that is why the churches do not know

the message of immortality— through prayer to the Father for His Love—as I preached it when on earth as the Messiah of God.

With all my blessings, and those of the Father, I am

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 4

Received August 26, 1957.

THE TRUE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW - THE FATHERS LOVE.

I am here, Jesus.

I was glad to be able to write you showing that the Christian churches as they are constituted at present are preaching a religion no different in its vital foundation from the religion of Judaism from which they parted, in that they are teaching the moral and ethical principles of human conduct as the way to God; and indeed, as I have shown, these churches by so doing are perpetuating the Mosaic code that leads to obedience of God's Laws and purification of the human soul, with a place in the Spiritual Heavens prepared for the human soul cleansed of sin.

These churches believe that, as the Messiah of God, or God Himself incarnate as the Son, I brought salvation to mankind, that is to say, to those church members who adhere to this belief, through my supposed sacrifice on the cross, wherein my divine shed blood is held to be a ransom for the sins of those who believe in this supposed sacrifice. To some, this means that they may continue to sin, for their sins are forgiven, as they falsely believe, and that church absolution for sinning is sufficient to keep them in a state of grace. This is entirely untrue and vicious.

Others, with a better understanding of what sin involves, declare that Christ's sacrifice of love, as they believe, makes man duty bound to answer this love with love of his own, which must manifest itself by the rejection of sin. And others are appealed to by their church in their human love for him whom they consider their savior in that they are taught, preposterously enough, that each individual sin renews the sacrifice I am supposed to have made on the cross for the sinner, and that I am subjected to the agonies of crucifixion repeatedly as each sin is committed. There is no understanding here that the spirit body of man, divested of the material body by death, is no longer subject to the bodily afflictions of the material world. In these cases, we have an appeal to man's human love to strengthen his will against the desire to sin. And this is Judaism, I must point out, whether the churches understand it or not. For just as the Jew is exhorted not to sin for the love of Jehovah and the Torah, so is the Christian exhorted not to sin for love of his savior. And the effect, if successful, is the same: strengthening of the human will against sinning and the subsequent step forward in soul purification.

In short, the doctrine of what the Christian calls the indwelling Spirit, or baptism with the Holy Ghost, is meaningless, because the Spirit or Ghost in his soul has no purifying action upon it; and the so-called fulfillment of the law by grace, as taught to Christians by the churches, is false and nonexistent.

For while the churches would like to say that, because of Christ's so-called sacrifice and man's faith in his name, man does not sin, they cannot in truthfulness so declare, for it is abundantly evident in all mankind that this is not the case.

Yet soul perfection through Love was my message as the Messiah, and that was what my immediate followers and their disciples taught, as is found in the New Testament and, if the false doctrines of my sacrifice and blood-shedding were eliminated as the interpolations they are, and if my message were understood and interpreted correctly, then what they preached is the truth, for the early church, free of the later Greek and pagan notions of mass and trinity that were added, was filled with individuals who had obtained to a certain, and some to a great, extent, that real Grace—the Father's Love—which, the Essence of God, is that which eliminates sin from the soul as it effects its transformation into a divine soul, and thus actually brought about a soul condition in them whereby the laws of Moses were no longer needed and the Torah fulfilled by the Divine Presence of the Father Himself in the souls of those to whom it came when sought for in earnest prayer.

So you can see that the churches of today are not preaching my message of the Father's Love, which leads to transformation of the soul into a divine soul and its concomitant purity, but are preaching instead the false doctrines of salvation through my supposed sacrifice on the cross and the resultant remission of sin through the shedding of my blood, with the consequences that the real Grace—the Father's Love—which I taught comes to man only through prayer to God, is not sought for and has not had the opportunity, except in relatively few cases, to cleanse and transform men's souls. And it is for this reason that Christians have not experienced the Father's Love in their souls, nor have remission of sins, as they think, for they still sin and are tempted to sin without ceasing.

And thus many Christians, while they continue to be churchgoers and adhere to the rites and ceremonies of their respective churches, realize that the great Saving Grace they have been promised and told is theirs with mere belief in my name has not been experienced as a reality in their lives, and they are disappointed and feel frustrated, as indeed they are, that the New Birth is not really theirs.

And the answer given by the churches is pure speculation and a pious hope that belief in Jesus' name will give them, when they die, a place in Heaven, and that until then they must have faith in the teachings of the churches. What a poor and apologetic answer this is, and how contradictory to their own New Testament which preaches with authority the evidences on this earth of the transformation which God's Grace—His Love—makes in the human soul; in Peter, in Saul of Tarsus (Paul), in Mary Magdalene, in Levi the publican (Matthew), in John and James and my other disciples, in Nicodemus ben Gurien, in Barnabas, Cornelius, Apollo, Aquila and Priscilla, Silas, Timothy and many others I may name, many of whom died as martyrs because of their certain knowledge of their immortality of soul through the possession of the Father's Love I came to make available to mankind as the Messiah of God.

Christians must learn that what they call the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the believer in my name is a myth. And the proof of the falsity of that doctrine is the brutal but incontrovertible fact that Christians, as other faiths of mankind, continue to be tempted and sin.

And Christians, like other people, will continue to sin in this world and suffer the effects of their sins for a long time in the world to come, until they stop believing in my name for their salvation and pray to the Father for His Love, so that, in answer to such prayer, His Love—His real Grace—is conveyed into their souls by the Holy Spirit and effects that transformation of soul from human into divine souls, in the true fulfillment of the Law.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 4

Received September 25, 1957.

ABRAHAM'S TRUE FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.

I am here, Jesus.

It is so important for mankind to know in what ways Christianity as it is constituted today is not bringing the message of immortal life as I preached it when on earth that I must continue to dwell upon this subject in detail. Since Christians are being taught, and they believe, that they achieve salvation in special ways from faith in my name, and through so-called communion with me, they must be thoroughly disabused of this tragic fallacy, in order that they may be enabled to have an open mind and heart for the Father's Love.

And so it is that I must continue to let these Christians and all mankind know that mere faith in my name will not be sufficient for their salvation, in that such faith will cover their sins in the sight of God. This religious notion, of course, goes back to a saying in Genesis 15:6, to the effect that "Abraham believed in God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And so these people are told, and believe, that if they have faith in Jesus' name, they too will have it accounted to them for righteousness, and their sins will be as white as fleece in the sight of the Father.

But this is one of the many passages in the Scriptures which does not present accurately that which transpired at the time of Abraham, and the supposed testing of his faith with Isaac, for the account given in the Old Testament was written in its final form some two thousand years after the event it is supposed to describe, and the ideals which pervaded at this time, namely, the return from Babylonia and deep faith in God, were very much different from the religious thoughts of the times of Abraham, when human child sacrifice and belief in fertility gods were prevalent. And when Abraham had faith in the Father, his faith had been void and in vain had he not accompanied his faith with works and deported out of Ur of the Chaldees. And when Abraham had faith, he had faith that God did not wish him to sacrifice his son Isaac, and thus he carried out that faith in works by sacrificing an animal instead. For Abraham rebelled against the customs of the times to sacrifice children, for had he placed Isaac on the altar, it would have been not out of obedience to God, but in obedience to the sacrificial rites and ceremonies of his day. For God, through his messengers, had revealed unto Abraham not to bring his son Isaac to sacrifice, and such was Abraham's faith in God that he obeyed with works, and broke with the religious customs of the time. And this was Abraham's real faith and obedience to God, for God never tested anyone in such a manner, for God is not brutal, as He is so often depicted in the Scriptures, but He is a kind and loving Father who, through Abraham, was able to bring about in that area of the world the cessation in time to come of that horrible practice.

And so I wish to show what Abraham's faith really was, and how it was misunderstood by the writers of the Old Testament, who inserted the supernatural appearance of the ram and the cruel testing of his faith as part of the story they could not otherwise understand; and I wish to show that Abraham's faith was not sterile, but led to action and doings contrary to what was customary in those days, and it was in the accomplishment of these works that Abraham did what was righteous. For as my brother James said in his Epistle, Abraham's faith reached supreme expression through his works, for there is no faith without the practice of that faith, and it was in that way that when Abraham believed in God that it was accounted to him for righteousness and he was called the "Friend of God ." (James 2: 23.)

And thus I say to the Christians of today who believe that their faith is their righteousness and that their sins will be covered by their faith in my name, that they will be greatly dismayed when they come into the world of spirits and realize that their Christianity was based on falsity, and that their sins, far from being covered by a white fleece, will be completely visible to the eyes of spirits capable of seeing those sins, and that the only way these sins can be removed is through the workings of the Law of Compensation, in bitterness, tears and remorse, or by having faith that God, in His Great Goodness and mercy, will answer their supplications for His Love and alleviate thereby their own soul wounds and evil incrustations.

So, Christians, be not blinded by a saying in the Scriptures that may lead to conduct contrary to the Laws of God on the false premise that what is contained therein is the word of God and is therefore sacred, for my brother James had to preach against a faith devoid of conduct in life—an attitude which gained headway at the time and which is still being perpetuated by some of the churches. For neither rites, ceremonies, nor vain religious beliefs, will bring purification of the soul and a place in the Spiritual Heavens, without that conduct which is in conformity to God's Laws, regardless of church or standing therein.

I will close now, and write next time on, "Why it is that no shedding of blood can bring remission of sins," as claimed by the churches of today.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 5

Received October 22, 1957.

THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE BLOOD SACRIFICE.

I am here, Jesus.

Tonight I wish to write on why it is that no blood, be it of man or beast, has the efficacy of redeeming mankind of sin, as taught in some of the churches.

This thought is at the apex of what is called the mass, as practiced in the Catholic church, and is the basis for what is known as the communion in other churches. This rite has no foundation in Judaism and it is written, falsely, that it was I who instituted the ceremony at the Last Supper, but the church likes to point to some unimportant incidents in the old Scriptures as indicative of the future rite, which I shall explain as having no relationship to the mass and simply a severe distortion of the facts to accord with the church's views.

The church also states that the efficacy of the blood sacrifice is plainly written in the Old Testament, and since that book is sacred and the word of God, then it is factual, and beyond any doubt, that such a rite does cleanse of sin. The statement referred to, of course, is that "the life is in the blood," taken from the sacrificial code in Leviticus. This statement, and what it really means, demands that mankind should obtain the explanation its importance requires.

Worship of Deity through a blood sacrifice, dating from an era prior to the dawn of our civilization, was quite widespread. It meant the placating of angry gods and the letting loose of certain virtues which the blood, especially of human beings, was supposed to possess. The barbarous peoples of those days, living daily close to death by violent means, either through warfare or in struggle with wild animals, were quick to observe the relationship of shed blood and loss of life, and it was therefore not strange that in time blood and life were thought of as being synonymous. Of course, there were other ideas pertaining to the source of life, for it was also noticed that there was no breathing in death, and some cultures entertained the notion that life was in the breath. The important thing to remember is that neither of these barbarian conceptions is sacred, but that they were merely primitive attempts to understand the source of life.

The Hebrew people subscribed to the idea of the efficacy of blood simply because it was widely accepted at the time and not because it was true or sacred. And so practices based on this concept developed as a sociological growth, divorced and separated completely from religion. Hence the Hebrews spilled blood of animals on the ground, and made sure that meat for consumption contained no blood, as prescribed in their daily laws.

The great contribution which the Hebrews made to the practice of the blood sacrifice was the rejection of human sacrifice, as found in the story of Abraham. This was a great humane advance, but the fact that animal sacrifice was offered, as written in the Old Testament, did not make that sacrifice sacred, nor did it make it in any way true that the shedding of animal blood

cleansed from sin. Then, as always, sin could only be cleansed by a penitent soul seeking forgiveness in prayer to the Father.

The priestly class among the Hebrews was naturally in favor of retaining these primitive views, not because they were true, because they were not, but because it was in the perpetuation of these rites that priests made their livelihood, for certain parts of the sacrificed animals were reserved for the priests. Such a class, devoted to the religious instruction, purity and ethical conduct of the people to whom they ministered, was to be encouraged, of course, but it is not hard to see that in time this priestly class, or many among that class, began to lose sight of the moral and ethical standard of living in which they were supposed to guide the people, in favor of those ritualistic activities to which they were the sole heirs and which gave them in their own eyes a unique importance; and it is for this reason, when the national life was destroyed by the Babylonian captivity, that the religion, or, better said, the rituals connected with their religion became dominant and all important. And it was thus that these priests invested many of the old primitive Hebrew customs with the aura of religion and sacredness. And after the return to Judea from Babylonia, the priests and scribes rewrote many of the old stories to suit the fancy of the priestly class, and thus it was that the brutal primitive concept of the blood sacrifice of animals for sin was retained with such vigor by the priests, as being vitally connected with their food, activities and importance.

The entire concept of the remission of sin through the shedding of blood is therefore based on a crude primitive custom and is in no way sacred or holy or the word of God as accepted blindly by the Catholic church, whose mass is simply a continuation of this primitive concept.

The prophets of Israel and Judah, aware of the falsity of the sacrificial system, attempted repeatedly to teach the people the religion of ethical and moral conduct. For Micah,* in the days of Israel, declared that these things alone were necessary to righteousness: to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with God. And the psalmist** said: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not." Then said I: "Lo, I come. I delight to do Thy Will." And other prophets, with sayings coming from God's messengers, wrote in a similar way. I will stop now, but I shall continue with this subject in my next sermon.

*Micah 6: 8.

**Psalms 40: 6 - 8.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 7

Received November 4, 1957.

THE CHRISTIAN RITE CALLED MASS.

I am here, Jesus.

I am here tonight to tell you about that Christian rite called the mass, or transubstantiation, and to give you further proof and additional reasons why this ceremony is neither God-given, as the church claims, nor was it ever, nor could be, instituted by me.

In my last sermon I have told you that the basic principle on which this rite is founded, the sacredness of the blood, or, shall I say, that the life of the living being is in the blood, was never revealed to man by God, nor is it true to the degree that blood is the component of man to which all other components are inferior and on which the Father has made the life principle dependent. First, because there are living organisms that do not contain a system of circulating blood, and because, in the animal kingdom, life is dependent in the last analysis upon the health of all the individual organs and their interrelationship to form an integrated whole functioning as a unit. And, further-more, life would be impossible without those physical conditions upon which life on earth is contingent. Rather than to say that any particular part of the being is sacred, it is the being itself that is sacred.

Now the church that developed in the several centuries following my appearance on earth with the mission from the Father that the time of salvation had arrived through prayer to Him for His Divine Love, this church, let me repeat, brought into existence the rite of the mass taken from the pagan ceremonies which revolved about the sacrifice of a god and his resurrection, and the aspiration of achieving communion with that god through partaking of his flesh and blood. This was done through participating in those pagan festivals featuring the eating of the flesh and blood of that animal sacred to, or identified with, that god. And thus much of the ancient world paid tribute to the sacred bull through Siva, through Dionysus, and through Mithra.

In Palestine the Canaanite cult of the bull extended temporarily to the Hebrews and was found in the baalim, or gods. Since the early Christians came to regard me as part of the godhead, and sacrificial in character, they came to identify me with the sacrificial lamb of the Hebrews. But as they could not partake of the flesh and blood of the sacrificial lamb because of the Passover feast, they found a substitute in the bread and wine instead— bread and wine because such a meal took away from the Christian rite any superficial similarity with the current pagan practices of feasting on animal flesh and blood, and because such a practice seem related, at least to the church leaders of those days, to the bread and wine which the king of Salem, Melchizedek, is supposed to have given Abraham in the story in Genesis. This gave these

churchmen the occasion to claim that, since this Melchizedek was a priest-king, my appearance, also, was in the role of priest-king.

I wish to state here very emphatically that I never have been a priest, either on earth or in the spirit world these many centuries, and that I never practice rites of a religious nature, and that my only act of reverence to the Father is intense prayer to Him for His Divine Love, which I did while on earth and ever since I entered into spirit life, and to seek to carry out with all my power and influence to do the Father's Will and help to turn mankind to Him and His Great Redeeming Love.

Never was I a king, as was Melchizedek, nor did I ever seek to become one, and the New Testament is correct in stating that I avoided the attempt of some of my unenlightened followers to make me king in Palestine. And the only reason for being Master of the Celestial Heavens is the state of my soul, which is filled to a certain degree with the Father's Essence, His Love, and which I shall continue to fill with His Love throughout all of everlasting eternity. In no way was I ever connected with Melchizedek, either as king or priest, nor did Melchizedek serve bread and wine with any other purpose than to be host to Abraham; and bread and wine was the repast because it was these foods which were most available in Palestine, and this may be seen from the name of my own birthplace, Bethlehem, meaning House of Bread, and the grapes decorating the veil of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the many parables of the grapevines I used in my teachings.

Now one of the reasons why the episode of Melchizedek has such importance to the Christians, as evidenced by the epistle to the Hebrews, is that Psalm 110 reads, in part, "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." This psalm is supposed to have been composed by David, the King, so that the wording is presumed to mean that the Father made David's Lord (taken by some churchman to mean me) a priest like Melchizedek. Actually this psalm was never composed by David, but by a member of his court and designed for David himself so that the meaning was that David was not only king by God's Grace, but that such loyalty also made him high priest. The occasion for this mention of David in connection with ecclesiastical duties came when he was instrumental in bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, when he danced before the Lord with all his might, and was girded with a linen ephod, and when he also offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings and blessed the people in the name of God.

In the same way the first lines of Psalm 110, stating, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand," does not mean, then, as has been interpreted, that God said unto David's Lord, meaning me, but that God said unto the writer's Lord, meaning David. If you will read this psalm carefully, you will see that the references to God's wrath reveal that the song is not a revelation of God, as some believe, but merely the embodiment of David, the king, as a servant of God who will vent his wrath upon the heathen nations.

Jesus of the Bible
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Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 8

Received December 19, 1957.

JEREMIAH, THE SUFFERING SERVANT.

I am here, Jesus.

I am interested in this sermon to tell all my listeners and readers how and why the 53rd chapter in Isaiah, dealing with the suffering servant of God, neither refers to me primarily nor any bearing upon my mission as the Messiah of God, in that, possessed of a soul divine through the efficacy of the Father's Love, I preached the message that prayer to God for His Love would bring man into at-onement with the Father.

In the first place I must tell you that the Hebrew scribes in their editing of the old manuscripts were fond of bringing together similar material under one heading, or shall I say under the name of one author, whether he was or not the sole writer. Many of the psalms attributed to David, the King, were not written by him. And many of the stories in the Chronicles and the Book of Kings show differences of content, according as the account was written by the earlier or the later source. Thus I want to tell you that the Book of Isaiah was not written by one prophet, but by several, even though the title in the Old Testament is under one man. You should know that two of the Isaiahs wrote before the destruction of the Temple and the captivity in Babylonia, but that the third one wrote as an exile in Babylonia and lamented in his writings the sufferings that Jeremiah had endured in trying to bring the people to an understanding of their dire situation. So that, when the last Isaiah wrote about the suffering servant of God, while he thought in a general way of Israel's being such an entity, yet he was thinking of Jeremiah, for, indeed, the life and death of Jeremiah were such that he was indeed a, or the, suffering servant of Jehovah, as the Father was called by the Hebrews at that time.

For you must know that Jeremiah suffered unto death because of his mission, assigned him by the Father, to have the people and rulers mend their ways, or otherwise create conditions of spiritual and material consequences which would bring about the destruction of Jerusalem, and the exile of the people. The priesthood and the people sought his death for his prophecy that the Temple would fall, and for calling it a den of iniquity. For this and for his fearlessness in rebuking their violations of the moral and ethical code of the Hebrew religion, the priests and people sought to invoke upon him a sentence of death. He escaped at his trial simply because moderates prevailed in an atmosphere where the sovereignty of the nation proved the prime stabilizing factor and helped restore order and common sense, whereas in my own case, the lack of this sovereignty helped to create conditions of hysteria. Later, Jeremiah was beaten by a Temple priest and placed in stocks, to bear the hostile looks and threats of passersby. When Jerusalem fell, and the people were taken to Babylonia in captivity, there were among the groups

that remained those who blamed Jeremiah's prophecies for the fate of the nation, and when they had the opportunity, they had him put to death in Egypt.

Now the last Isaiah, who wrote as an exile in Babylonia, learned of the unhappy end of the prophet and, realizing that Jeremiah had sought to prevent the catastrophe through turning the people back to the ways of law and righteousness, evoked the figure and the sufferings of Jeremiah as a servant of God who had suffered and died for his mission of turning the nation from its evil ways, and it is this episode in the history of the Jewish people which brought forth the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. In Babylonia, at this time, the conception of a divine victim who sacrificed his life for others was, as was true of other oriental cults, quite common at this period, and could be seen in the sufferings, death and triumphal resurrection of the god Tammuz. However, the Babylonian Isaiah thought that Jeremiah had died because of the sins of his people, and not, as Christians wish to interpret it, as an expiation for their sins. The writer felt that the figure of Jeremiah could be likened to one of these oriental gods, in that he had actually sacrificed his life in his attempt to keep the people of his nation from wrong- doing, and in that way, from disaster.

Deeply moved by the tragic experience of Jeremiah, and closely in touch with spirit forces at the time, the Babylonian Isaiah sensed that another prophet of a later day would arise and suffer a similar fate in seeking to save his people from sin and destruction. And here he had an inkling of what was to happen to me, not because he actually foresaw those events, but because he understood that, if the people continued to act in certain ways through the years, they would inevitably act in much the same way at a later period.

In short, never did the Babylonian Isaiah seek to prophecy my death as inherent in the role of Messiah, and never did he ever suggest or hint that the shedding of my blood on a cross was necessary for man's salvation. But he did mean that knowledge and obedience to the call to righteousness would help keep mankind from evil, and that was and is now a common belief—that those in the spirit world can, through their prayers to God, intercede with Him on behalf of others. This Isaiah had a feeling that the soul of a suffering servant of God, either of Jeremiah, as he thought likely, or of another prophet, was the key to salvation, and in this way he was right, for it was my soul, made divine through the Father's Love, which brought the potentiality of eternal life to mankind. Isaiah was aware of the "heart of flesh" declared by Jeremiah and thought that, in view of his great stand for righteousness, Jeremiah had been bestowed with such a heart by God.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 9

Received January 25, 1958.

THE NEW HEART IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

I am here, Jesus.

Yes, I am here tonight to tell you about the New Heart, and what it really means to mankind. I want to tell you that it is the New Heart that made of me, and makes me now, the Messiah of God, and that it was the New Heart which was foretold in the Old Testament by those ancient writers who had the spiritual perception to learn what was to be the Plan of the soul salvation for mankind, and recognized by the apostles and disciples who followed my teachings that the New Heart, and what it really was, constituted the fulfillment of God's Promise of salvation, in the days when I was on earth and preached my mission of the Father's Love.

I have been telling you in my sermons that the Way to the Father is only through prayer to the Father for His Divine Love which, on being conveyed into the human soul by the agency of the Holy Spirit, effects the elimination in the soul of those accretions and tendencies at odds with the purity of the soul, and brings about, above all, the transformation of that soul into a divine soul, the abode wherein the Essence of God dwells in mankind, and bringing the Kingdom of God to whosoever that personality may be.

This transformation of the human soul into a divine soul through prayer to the Father for His Love was, and is, the New Heart, which the writers and prophets foretold in the Old Testament, and which was fulfilled by my coming. These predictions were the true portents of the coming of the Messiah, for they told in what way the Messiah would prove his claim to be the son of God: He would be the first on earth to be possessed of a soul filled with the Divine Love of the Father, and it would be in the sense of a human being possessed of a divine soul that the Christ would have the New Heart and bring the Kingdom of God to earth with him.

Many of the predictions regarding the time and place and conditions associated with the Messiah are, of course, true, and I shall in due time deal with each of them as pertinent to my plan of setting forth the Truths of the Father, but here I must tell you that much distortion was resorted to by those who sought to establish that I was born of a virgin or of the seed of woman, or had come as a priest-king or sacrificial atonement and these so-called predictions are false and merely man-made interpretations to fit elaborated and preconceived notions to attract pagans into the church.

First I want to tell you about the idea of the New Heart and what it meant, at the periods it refers to, to the writers who conveyed the thought of the New Heart in the Old Testament, and then I want to tell you how the thought of a New Heart became acceptable to Hebrews when

religion meant, to a large extent, fear of an omnipotent God, and the placating of that God through sacrifices.

Now the prophet Samuel, in writing his early account of the anointing of Saul as first king of the Jews, recounts what he told Saul to do—to go towards Mt. Tabor, which many centuries later would be the scene of many of my activities, and there he would receive the Spirit of the Lord, which would turn him into a new man, and God would be with him. To the prophet Samuel, this meant, and he expounded it to Saul in this way, that he would have to be thereafter a man after God's Own Heart, a man pure in his thoughts and conduct. Of course, neither Samuel nor Saul had any understanding of the New Heart as being a transformation of soul brought about by the Father's Love, for His Love was unavailable to mankind at this time, but they understood a new heart to mean elimination of sin through purification wrought in man's soul by the influence of the Father. This cleansing effect, they believed, was effected by the Spirit of the Lord, as it was called in the Old Testament sent by Jehovah.

This means of purification was not an original thought with Samuel, but was used by him because he knew that God had wrought a new heart in Jacob, that is, He had caused a change in Jacob's character so that, indeed, he was a new man, and God Himself changed his name to Israel. So was Abraham a man of God, a man after God's Own Heart. Thus it was that Samuel felt that Saul, with his responsibilities as king of the Jews, would discard from his soul those sins and evil tendencies adhering to it, and be purified, through the Spirit of God, of these evils. He did not have the gift of prophesying, as was inserted into the Bible many centuries later by different editors, only recognition that Saul could become a new man in heart and be purified of sin through God's Help if Saul so willed it. And this did happen, as we know, until the old evils of the earth plane began to reassert themselves, as Saul began to turn from prayer to God and go his own way, impelled by his own desires and self-will.

This thought reoccurs when Jeremiah (Chapter 24, verse 7) spoke of the good and the bad figs, at the time of the captivity in Babylon, and said, "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." It meant that the means would be given the Hebrews in Chaldea to realize that faith in God and obedience to His Commandments of righteousness and justice and mercy were the only necessary requirements to insure survival over material disasters.

Ezekiel, too, in receiving his messages from the spirit world, which were of hope for the captives in the strange land, stated that the people of Israel would have another chance to be men after God's Own Heart, not by their own efforts, but through the Help of God, for God would give them one heart (Chapter 11, verse 19) and that meant, as I understood it, His Own, and He would give them a new spirit, His Own; He would take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and would give them a heart after His Own. His Help, in short, would enable them to rid themselves of their sins, so that, as the prophet saw it after, meant the ability of the people to obey God's Laws and Statutes. And again (in Chapter 36, verse 26) Ezekiel was impressed to use the same language: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." And in verse 27 "...and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them."

And it meant that man himself could not help himself to purify himself, but could do so with the Help of God, for if man were willing, God would give him that New Heart which would

be free of sin and evils. Not by any rite or ceremony or dance, but as the prophet Micah said, by doing what was right in the sight of God, and as Amos said, by letting justice well up as a mighty stream.

Now, as I have said, the New Heart for Samuel, for Jeremiah, and for Ezekiel, meant the purification of man's soul from sin, for nothing beyond such purification was known to the Hebrews before my coming, but there were other things in the Old Testament which spoke, not of law and of justice, but of Love—the Father's Love for His children—and it was this Love which I finally grasped and realized was the New Heart which God had promised unto the Hebrews through His prophets. And while for them the New Heart meant one thing, for me, in the full experience of the Father's Love aglow in my own soul, the New Heart meant the Father's Love, the help that would free man from sin forever, and more, give him that Heart at-one with the Father's, divine with the Father's throughout all eternity. It was in this way that I understood and knew in my soul that I was the divine child of the Father.

In my next sermon I shall tell you about the Father's Love promised in the Old Testament, how the people came to realize that God was not a primitive God of fear, to be appeased through sacrifice, but a God of Love unto His children, and how I came to understand that I was the Messiah because of that Love in my own soul.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 10

Received February 18, 1958.

HUMAN LOVE IS A PREREQUISITE TO AN APPRECIATION OF DIVINE LOVE.

I am here, Jesus.

In my ninth sermon, I wrote about the New Heart, and how it was that in the long intervals of time recorded in the Old Testament, men became aware that if man turned to God, He would help them become men after His Own Heart, which, to them, meant a soul free of evil, and imbued with a sense of righteousness, justice and mercy towards one another. I showed how this took place in the time of the prophet Samuel with the anointing of Saul, and how in later times the prophets were convinced that, in the course of time, God would pour out His Spirit upon His children and give them a New Heart, wherein the soul would be without evil and sin, and bright with the purity of justice, love and mercy.

Now in my last sermon I also mentioned specifically Ezekiel and Jeremiah, for they were those prophets who made principal use of the term, the New Heart, or the heart of flesh, in the sense that purification of the soul was available to man when man sought God's Aid in obtaining it. In fact, the message received by the prophets said that the day would come when man would be ready to receive His Help, and that God promised His Help when that day would come.

But when, as a youth, I studied the Old Testament with the Father's Love already aglow, and increasing steadily in my own soul, I found that purification of man's soul was available to humanity by obedience to His Commands as found in the Ten Commandments given to Moses, and that the promise of the New Heart, the heart of flesh, wherein the Spirit of God was to be poured out upon mankind, must mean something above and beyond what was then available to mankind. And I found, with the Father Himself my mentor, that the Way to soul divinity was not through sacrifices or rituals out of fear, nor in the development of the human love, but in doing His Will of obtaining His Love through sincere prayer to Him.

And I found that, alongside of the concept of God as one who exulted in the blood of His enemies, or one who punished a believer if he did not conform exactly to the rituals of the many offerings, which, I must tell you, God never commanded Moses to write, there was a growing understanding of God as a Father who loves His children, who exulted in kindness and mercy and righteousness, wherein His children could come to him and purify their souls of their defilement. And I saw, from the basis in the inspired writings in the Old Testament, that God was a God of Divine Love and Mercy, and that the New Heart promised by God for man was a soul filled with His Love, which would not only purify that soul but make of it a new soul, immortal

in its possession of the Father's Love. And the Father's Love in my own soul told me that the New Heart, which up to the time of my coming could mean only a purified soul, meant that the soul of mankind could now be transformed into a divine soul, filled with the Father's Essence, Divine Love, and that I, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph and Mary, did possess in my soul the Father's Love and that I was to that extent, divine. In that way I realized that I was the Anointed One, the Messiah, through whom salvation was to be given to mankind, and that in me the New Heart of the Old Testament had been fulfilled.

Now for mankind to know and appreciate the wonderful Love and Mercy of the Father in granting His Divine Essence for the eternal life of His children with increasing happiness for them throughout all everlasting time, mankind had to develop an understanding of what this Love was and its power of eliminating evil, and the only way it could be done was through the record of the story of human love, for this is what man had been endowed with at his creation, and was something which he could understand.

And so the message of love in the Old Testament is one of human love, with the promise of that Greater Love which I was sent to make available to mankind. But the story of that Greater Love, interrupted by my death and misunderstood by those who followed my apostles, has been unfolded fully only to souls in the world of spirits. And those who have accepted this message as true have come unto the Glory of the Father, and are living with Him in the Celestial Heavens, redeemed children of the Father and divine angels of Divine Love. But those souls who live in the material world, and many who lived in the material world since the day I proclaimed the message of Divine Love to mankind, are not hearing the message which I proclaimed, and are seeking their way to God through the development of their human love, and this love cannot lead to the Celestial Heavens and the divine soul, but only to the Spiritual Heavens of the purified, but still human, soul.

Now the development of human love in the Old Testament is a narrative about which many volumes can be written, and I cannot in these sermons do more than to lay down the guiding lines for further elaboration, but already in Abraham, the man after God's heart, human love shines forth. His love of his son Isaac, breaking with the practice of human sacrifice, current during his day to appease the deities of wrath in which mankind then believed; his pleadings with God that sinful Sodom be spared; his proposals to Lot, his brother's son, for a peaceful settlement of their dispute over cattle; and his rescue of this same Lot from captivity when Sodom was taken by marauding chieftains reveal the love which Abraham had for his fellowman and for his God many hundreds of years before the First Commandment to Moses was given to the people as a binding Commandment from Jehovah.

And the Old Testament writers are concerned with Jacob, son of Isaac, the digger of wells, and how Jacob became prince of Israel after his turbulent years of deceit and trickery. From the robbing of his brother's birthright and blessings, one comes to a different Jacob, a person who shows his sorrow when his sons killed the males of the people of Hamor and Shechem, who sought to marry Dinah, after he had defiled her. And Jacob, many years after deceiving his brother, seeks not to escape or fight Essau, but decides upon some restitution in the form of a gift. And Essau, when he saw his younger brother, ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and they wept.

And this was the kind of human love, between father, brother and son, which mankind could understand, and had to first understand before they could understand the love which the Heavenly Father has for His children.

In my next sermon I shall continue with the development of the human love in the Old Testament.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 11

Received April 4, 1958.

THE FATHER'S DIVINE LOVE FORESHADOWED IN JOSEPH'S EXPERIENCES.

I am here, Jesus.

I am here again tonight to continue with my series of sermons showing the development of the human love, and the way to the perfection of the human soul, in the Old Testament; and this as the prelude and necessary prerequisite to the bestowal upon mankind of the potentiality of receiving the Father's Love.

Now in this sermon, I wish to show that the story of Joseph and his brothers is of great importance to the Old Testament as a document which points out, and has pointed out, for many centuries, that human love, as a forerunner of the Father's Love, can overcome evil; and this story, with its drama of a father's bereavement, brothers' jealousy and resentment, the young boy's change of character through suffering as a slave in a foreign land and his generosity towards his erring brothers in forgiving their sin and helping them to prosperity, is one which has caused many tears to flow and a stirring in the soul on realization that the goodness displayed by Joseph reaches what is most noble in the human heart, and gives an inner knowledge that their goodness is latent in all mankind, and that it comes as a Great Gift of the Father, in His wonderful Love and Mercy.

This story, or at least, parts of it, especially dealing with Potiphar's wife, was current in Egypt as well as in Palestine, and of course these aspects which deal with Egyptian customs and names are authentic, but the element which treats of love and forgiveness and changes in the human heart wrought by suffering and remorse, as well as the conception that the Father uses the baser deeds of his unredeemed children to beneficent ends, is the result of the Hebrew writer's inner spiritual understanding that human love, mercy and forgiveness are manifestations of the soul, and that, as these are practiced, man walks in the ways of God, and approaches close to Him.

Now Joseph, being the favorite of Jacob, incurred the enmity of his brothers, some of whom, born of different mothers, plotted to rid themselves of him; in the midst of this hatred stands the figure of Reuben who, though he violated his father's bed with the concubine Bilhah, would not consent to the slaying of Joseph, and suggested instead that he be thrown into a pit. He intended in truth to take him out of it later, but left the vicinity to obtain water, but when he returned, found Joseph gone. Now Joseph would have been slain had not a group of itinerant Arabs fortunately appeared at the time, for Judah, with Reuben a son of Leah, proposed that Joseph be sold into slavery to them rather than be killed.

But when Reuben returned to deliver Joseph out of the pit, Joseph was gone, for a group of Midianite merchantmen of the caravan had passed by and in Reuben's absence the brothers sold him to the Arabs, and they sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guards. And Reuben rent his clothes. And he returned to his brothers and said, "The child is not; and I, wither shall I go?" For Reuben was Jacob's first born and was in a manner responsible for the safety of the brothers, and he felt that a terrible crime had been committed against one of their number, and that he could not face his father with the news.

The old father wept bitterly and could not be consoled, and the brothers realized the enormity of their sin, and the deep pain they had inflicted upon their father only added to their sense of guilt and remorse.

But Joseph was saved by his abiding faith in the Father, and in the rectitude of his behavior towards people. For the blow of his brothers' hatred and false accusations of Potiphar's wife, which sent him to Pharaoh's prison, could not prevent him, despite the unhappy circumstances which they compelled him to face, from overcoming these great evils; for he was good, and kind, and the Egyptians in power found he could be trusted. and he survived, and finally his gift of interpreting dreams, which was very much in vogue among the Egyptians in those days, enabled him to prevail.

Thereafter the story concerns Joseph's repayment in love and forgiveness the hatred which had boiled against him in his brothers. For Joseph dearly loved his brothers and his aged father, for this was a love that was kept whole by his love of God, for he attributed to God the forgetfulness of the wounds which he had suffered at his brothers' hands and he saw in them his own flesh and blood in a land of strangers.

Now Joseph knew that, in the course of the famine that stalked all the lands of that region, his brothers would eventually have to come to him for bread, and he knew that they would eventually bow down to him in obedience, as one of his dreams had foretold. But Joseph more than anything else, wanted their love, and if they would but show sincere remorse for their crime against him, he was ready to shower them with his affection. And as Joseph loved those who had sinned against him, does not the Father love with His Eternal Love those who sin against Him and His children?

The remainder of the story, in its essentials, puts the brothers to the test. The requirement that the youngest of the brothers, Benjamin, be brought to prove their word, put them in a precarious position, for if anything befell the youngest, they knew their old father would not survive the loss. If, on the other hand, they did not bring Benjamin to Egypt. They would starve. They were caught in the terrible position of exposing to death a brother, and also their father in precisely the same way they had so callously done many, many years before. But Joseph's brothers had changed. For where once they had sought in hatred to destroy, they now sought earnestly to save. And this change of heart is further shown by the fact that if they returned to Egypt with Benjamin, they also put their own lives in jeopardy, for, with the sacks filled with gold on Joseph's orders, they faced certain accusation of theft.

The dilemma with Benjamin, and the leaving of Simeon as hostage in Egypt, made them believe that retribution for the crime against Joseph had come. And they said to one another, . . . "We are verily guilty concerning our brother Joseph, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." And Reuben answered them, saying: "Spake not I unto you, do not sin against the child; and ye would

not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required.” And they knew not that Joseph understood them, for he spake unto them by an interpreter. And he turned himself about from them, and wept. . . .(Genesis 42: 21 – 24)

For Joseph saw that not only were they now very much alive to the sorrows and bereavement of their old father, and that they were courageous enough to face a threatened calamity so that they, their father and their families might survive, but that they had been made aware of the terrible crime they had committed against their own. And, in his great love and mercy, he sought not restoration nor retribution, but the changing of their souls from evil intent and action to that of love. And that had been accomplished, for whereas the brothers had thrown away the life of Joseph for whatever might befall him, they now sought to guard Benjamin's life with their very own as surety, especially Judah, who had suggested bondage in Egypt for Joseph. And when Judah, on the brothers' return to Joseph's house after the money is found in Benjamin's sack, pleads desperately to be kept in bond instead of Benjamin, so that his old father, Jacob, shall not die of grief. Joseph cannot resist revealing himself to his brothers, because of the common love which they both have for their father, and for their brother Benjamin.

And he wept aloud . . . and Joseph said unto his brethren, “I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?” And his brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence. (Genesis 45: 2-3) And he went on to forgive them, and that they be not grieved, nor angry with themselves, that they had sold him to Egypt, finding a reason for it; that it was the will of God that he come to Egypt so as to be the means of saving them all from starvation. And he wept and embraced his brother Benjamin, and kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. And the story ends with Jacob's joy and the sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt.

The story of Joseph, then, is an intensely human one, where fatherly affection and brotherly love are able to overcome envy and hatred and bring about after many years a great service to mankind.

Of considerable importance is the conception which Joseph has of the Father, for in many respects it is on a far superior level to what was then considered a deity, even among the Hebrews, for much of the concept which these people entertained of God was embedded in the general ideas which then prevailed in the civilized world of that day. The Father was considered a god to be appeased by various offerings and sacrifices, which if not rendered in the ways prescribed, would bring down the god's wrath upon the tribe in form of disasters, or plagues that destroyed the crops and domestic animals, or the invasions of ruthless barbarians.

In the story of Joseph, however, the Father is truly a Father of Love, wherein He watches over each of His children, minimizes the effects upon them of the evils of mankind and the vicissitudes of nature, and rehabilitates them for their own and the common good. While He does not by His authority prevent evil thoughts or actions, which to do so would violate the integrity of the human will which He created and respects, yet He weaves and brings about through His messengers those circumstances which will lift His children from the abyss in which they either send others or into which they themselves are thrown. Here, then, was not an angry or a jealous tribal God—such as He is conceived by some in the Old Testament, to be propitiated by ritual or ceremonies, or a fearful God of vengeance for human wrongdoing— but a universal Loving Father, keenly alive to the needs of His children, be they Egyptian or Hebrew, and helping to

alleviate their sufferings due to the material failures of nature, through those of His children who respond to His spiritual call as well as through those in the spirit world.

Joseph is saved because he has that deep fundamental faith in the Father that enables him to surmount every blow and obstacle through His certain Aid; he reaches the point where that faith enables him to lay aside his fierce resentment towards his brothers which one can but surmise from the narrative, and in its place, to fill his soul with human love to such an extent that he can love and forgive with a deep devotion to those who had so mercilessly ill-treated him—and the result is the conquest of the great material hardships for the benefit of all.

But this story is not only of human love, but also of the glimpse of that far greater Love—the Divine Love of the Father, to be bestowed upon all mankind. For Joseph's heart is so full of generosity, love and mercy towards his brethren and his father, and so intense in its nature, and bringing with them such noble and magnanimous actions, that people everywhere who have read the story considered his love and mercy far beyond human capabilities, and made them feel that such an outpouring of such love and mercy must be divine, and that they had been imparted into Joseph from the Father to bring about the salvation of His children from so great a distress. And thus it was that men obtained an inkling that there must be a Divine Love, and of what this Love must be like, and in this way they saw in Joseph a prototype of the Christ to come—that person who would bear in himself the very Love with which the Father loves His children.

With all my blessings, and those of the Father, I am

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 12

Received April 10, 1958.

RUTH'S TRUST IN THE FATHER'S LOVE.

I am here, Jesus.

In this sermon I continue to show you how the Old Testament of the Hebrews developed stories in which some of the characters act towards their fellowmen in a spirit of love attesting to that human love which was implanted in mankind by God and was the forerunner of that sublime love which the Father has available for whosoever of His children seek it in earnest prayer, so that, abiding in their souls, it will provide the salvation which. as the Messiah of God. I brought with me when on earth.

This story concerns Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth who followed the old widow back from Moab to her native Bethlehem in Judea, from whence she had come with her sons at a time when famine dwelt in the land Palestine. And in Moab, Naomi, the widow, lived with her two sons and Daughters-in-law, until, given the harshness of the times, the two sons were stricken and she decided to return to her native land, with the thought that her daughters-in-law would perhaps find new husbands in their own country,

Now Ruth's sister-in-law, Oprah, returned to her people and to those gods which the Moabites of those times worshipped, and indeed, Naomi bade Ruth do likewise, but Ruth replied with those words which have become so soul-stirring in its religious appeal, not only in Hebrew, but in many languages all over the earth.

“Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.” (Ruth 1: 16 - 17)

Now from those memorable words, it may be concluded that Ruth, the Moabite, daughter of a pagan people, had received some unusual or miraculous knowledge of the Father, to be able to thus forsake her own local gods and adhere to the God whose existence had been made known to her through her Hebrew husband and mother-in-law; and to a certain degree, this is true. But actually, the loving nature of the Father, to the extent that it was known to the peoples of those days, had become known to her through her relationship with Naomi. For Naomi was kind, and loving, treating her daughters-in-law with a solicitude and a tenderness, and a care for their welfare that brought out in Ruth a great feeling of love and devotion, and it was thus that she wanted to share the fortunes or vicissitudes with this woman who was to her like a mother. And it was these qualities of warmth and love and affection, of concern for Ruth and her interests, that made Ruth realize that here was a person who in her way of life manifested a soul that shone with the light of her loving Father in Heaven.

And so Ruth concluded, and she had had many years of life together with Naomi to come to this decision, that a good hearted woman such as Naomi could exist only if her Creator—her God—possessed the wonderful qualities of love and kindness which He had imparted to His Creation. and since Naomi was a Hebrew, she knew in her heart that the God of the Hebrews was a God of Love, such as He manifested through His children.

And when Ruth made her abode in Bethlehem, she found that just as a Hebrew woman could be loving and kind to a degree not before experienced in her life, so could a Hebrew man be as tender and loving, whether he was her husband or not. For when Boaz saw her gleaning in the fields, his heart went out in sympathy for her, because of her unpretentiousness and her humility, her resigned acceptance of the harsh events in her life to which she had been subject, and her willingness to place herself at his mercy. These qualities caused her to find favor in his eyes. And again, he wished to repay her for all the kindness which she, though a pagan woman, had done unto Naomi, his kinsman, and he admired her for her courage in leaving her father and mother, and coming to live in a land of strangers. And he knew she had put her trust in the Heavenly Father, and being a religious man and endowed with a sense of responsibility towards his goods, which he felt were a sort of trusteeship from the Father's Bounty, he felt that her trust in the Father should not be in vain, but be rewarded. And Naomi said unto her daughter-in-law,

“Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.” (Ruth 2: 20) And she was speaking of her kinsman, Boaz.

The remainder of the story deals with the business deal whereby the nearer of kin was unable to redeem Naomi’s field, in that it would mar his own inheritance, and thus it gave Boaz an opportunity to do so and also obtain Ruth as his wife, in accordance with the Hebrew law which permitted a next of kin to marry that man’s wife or other eligible female.

And thus it was that through her love for Naomi, her mother-in-law, that Ruth, the pagan woman of Moab, left her native land and clung on to her; and it was because of the kindness and love which Boaz saw in Ruth’s treatment of her dead brother’s wife, that he himself appreciated the warmhearted qualities of the Moabite, and caused him to fall in love with her, regardless of her different race. The story, then, has a certain relationship with that of Joseph, in that it demonstrates with what conviction the Hebrews of those days, as well as many sincere Hebrews of today, relied upon God’s Love and Mercy to lift them out of the pit of evil fortune and troublesome times. For the goodness of Naomi, of Ruth and of Boaz, working together in harmony and human love, was able to surmount the vicissitudes suffered by the two women as a result of the hard times, in famine and pestilence, which then prevailed in those days of the Judges. And the final prosperity and happiness which succeeded the trials that beset the two women, was seen as the Hand of God in His Great Goodness and Mercy, outstretched to deliver His children from the evils of the world. And in reading the story of Ruth, people have seen in the narrative the great influence which sincere human love and good-will, as the spiritual inheritance bestowed upon man with God’s creation of the human soul, possess in making right the wrongs brought about by the action of material things as well as by those in whom the soul is dormant. So that Ruth is one of the great stories of the Old Testament which demonstrates the development of the human love, as a love given to mankind by the Father, who, while His children love with a human love, loves His children with that Divine Love which is His Essence, and which is now available to all those who seek that Love in earnest longing and prayer.

Before concluding, I wish to point out a number of other aspects of the story which help make of it one of the great universal narratives, which has a bearing upon the nature of the Father as a God of Love. For while it appears in the Old Testament of the Hebrews, and deals with a period of time affecting the lives of these people, yet the work is one that belongs to all the children of the Father. For Ruth is not a Hebrew, but a woman of the Gentiles, and it demonstrates that the human being is worthy of love and affection, loyalty and kindness, with out regard to his race or religion, and I might add the color of his skin, for man is the child of the Father by virtue of his created soul, and to treat one another with love is to manifest the Nature of the Father, at least to the degree it was then available to mankind, and show that God exists through the works of his created beings. And for men to love one another with the Divine Love is to be a participant in that Love with which the Father loves His children, and we, both mortal and spirits, who possess that Love in our hearts, become at-one with the Father in that Love to the extent of that possession.

As a conclusion, let me state in its final form, edited many centuries after it was written down for the first time, it becomes a protest against the priestly prohibition of intermarriage between Hebrews and Gentiles at the time when the Babylonian Jews were permitted by Cyrus to return to rebuild Jerusalem. This caused considerable distress and hardship among people of

mixed marriages. The story of Ruth was a plea for love and tolerance and human values above strictly racial considerations.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 13
Received July 21, 1958

KING DAVID'S ABUNDANT KINDNESS.

I am here, Jesus.

I have been telling you about those narratives in the Old Testament wherein God is visualized as a God of Love, if not the Father of Divine Love, then the Jehovah whose Love shines forth on that human level displayed by His children. In the previous sermons I have pointed out how love between brothers, between son and father, and between in-laws, reflects this love between man and his fellowman indicative of the human soul created in the image of the Father.

In this sermon, and in others to follow, I wish to tell you about the development of this human love as possessed and practiced by the greatest king of the Hebrew nation, David Ha-Melech, as he is, and has been called, with deepest affection and reverence by the Jewish people throughout the centuries.

David, the youngest son of Jesse, a well-to-do land owner and cattle raiser of Bethlehem, was a strong and agile youth, both given to poetic sentiment and to deeds of the chase, and his father saw that he should be given music lessons as understood in those days. When King Saul began to suffer from moods of melancholia and distemper, it was arranged to bring David into the court as harpist, to soothe Saul in his difficult moments, but David was soon able to become Jonathan's armor-bearer, and accompanied him on some raids into the lines of the Philistines. On the other hand, David was never anointed secretly by Samuel to become the next king of the Hebrews, and this story was inserted many years later into the Scriptures when David was already on the throne in Jerusalem in order to strengthen David's claim to legitimacy by making it appear he had been chosen by God through Samuel, His prophet. Actually, David became king in a war with Saul's son, Ishbaal, after the death of Saul and Jonathan at Mt. Gilboa. It was generally accepted that victory was given to him whom God favored.

In the same way, the account of David's triumph over Goliath of Gath is simply a story and never did take place. The Philistine giant was indeed killed in battle, but by Elhanan, one of David's men. The whole narrative of David's return to his father's house, his brother's anger on

his appearance at the battle front, his inability to use armor, the king's complete ignorance of David afterwards, and the taking of the giant's head to Jerusalem, when the city was still in the hands of the Jebusites and was not captured by David until many years later, all show the hand of a later writer who introduced into the Scriptures this fable of David's exploit to enhance his fame for gallantry and to emphasize his trust in God.

For David had implicit trust in the Father, and sought His aid and protection at every turn, and through his prayers to Him felt that He would uphold him and deliver him out of the hands of his enemies even in the direst circumstances. David did things that were evil in the sight of the Father, and he knew that they were wrong, and he also did many evil things resulting from the prevailing circumstances of his times, which he did not realize at the time to be evil, but for which he would nevertheless have to compensate, yet David's separation from God was always temporary, and he would seek the Father for forgiveness, for safety and salvation, and abide stoically by what he felt were God's answers to him conveyed through the prophets of his time, Nathan and Gad.

And the truth is that God did through His ministers deliver David out of the hands of his enemies and their jealousies, as God always delivers His children out of the troubles of the material world, sustains them with courage in the times of woe and prepares the circumstances, at the appropriate time, and through His agents, in the flesh and in the spirit world, that supplant the evils of prevalent physical conditions and the inclinations of unredeemed human beings. And even when the material laws that govern material conditions cannot be abrogated, and death ensues, the human soul can always, in the present ages, receive the Divine Love of the Father, and the happiness, such, that the human being has no conception of, that derives from possession of the Father's Love and an abode in His Celestial Heavens, or indeed that happiness that comes from a purified soul and a high place in the Spiritual Heavens, that nullifies the unhappiness that may arise on leaving the material world and its attractions.

And when David wrote his Psalms, those that he did, he had a transcendent realization, though not possession, of God's Divine Love and His Mercy to him and to mankind, and his own love of God was in keeping with, and concomitant with, his love and generosity towards other human beings. For, with all of David's sins, he possessed a heart filled with kindness far beyond what could be expected of a refugee hunted by a jealous king and, reversely, of the most powerful Hebrew monarch of the ages, whose every whim and wish were law.

And while David is here thanking me as I say this,* I must in all fairness state that David's life was abundant in kindness, charity and generosity, and in the lines that follow will show how these wonderful Gifts of the Father to David were used, to David's eternal credit, to help, to forgive and to refrain from retaliation. David's basic nobility of heart, as well as his valor in warfare, was thoroughly understood and appreciated by Jonathan, Saul's son, and the love and friendship between the two have become proverbial throughout the centuries. We see how Jonathan's fidelity to his friend was extremely instrumental in David's escape from Saul, and the same may be said of Michal, his wife.

*David was present when Jesus was writing this sermon.

Jesus of the Bible
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Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 14

Received July 22, 1958.

DAVID'S UNSHAKABLE FAITH IN THE FATHER.

I am here, Jesus.

In countless stories and commentaries about David, his valor in battle, his power of leadership, his skill in extending boundaries of the Hebrew nation and inevitably his sins with Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, are those themes which constantly come up, and they are, perhaps, warranted and justified in estimating the qualities of the man and judging his character, and I should also add, from the religious viewpoint, his unshakable faith in the Father, and, of course, this is true, but I also want to tell you that David was also a man of personal warmth and that he showed kindness and sympathy not as a duty which he thought was due to God, but which came from his heart and which he felt as a human being.

Hence David entertained a deep affection for Jonathan, in that he sensed in him a loyal friend, and felt sympathy for the young man whose father was irascible and at times uncontrollable in his fits of temper. They acted together in manly sports of the day befitting a monarch's son and his squire and came to appreciate each other's mettle in forays and hunting. Jonathan's unhappiness as the son of King Saul, who would have sacrificed him to maintain an oath, as happened in earlier times in the days of the Judges, was alleviated by his friendship for David, and therefore one should not be surprised to find him acting to save his friend from the persecution of the man who quite often was not as a father to him.

And so Jonathan made a covenant with David, "And thou shalt not only while I live show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not, but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house." (1 Samuel 20: 14 – 15) For David and Jonathan knew in their souls that kindness in mankind came from God, and that, as the law of Moses proclaimed, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." And thus they understood that the Father's Love acted through the love which man showed for man, but they had, of course, no idea that Divine Love was any different from the love which Moses had proclaimed: love for God and one's fellow man. They recognized that soul could be purified, but never that it could be made divine through the Father's Love, for this Love was unknown and could not be possessed by mankind until, as the Messiah of God, I came in possession of that Love and had proclaimed its availability to mankind.

And Jonathan came to console David when he had to live as an outlaw in the wilderness and in different strongholds, and David shed bitter tears when hearing of Jonathan's death, and that of his father, in the disaster of Mt. Gilboa. And he lamented:

. . . . Jonathan upon thy high places is slain.

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan;
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me;
Wonderful was thy love to me,
More lofty than the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of warfare destroyed. (2 Samuel 1: 25 – 27)

As for Saul's death, David felt that this was punishment from God, and vindication of his own ethical behavior, that it was not given unto him to destroy God's anointed ruler over Israel, even though he was bent upon killing him. For as a fugitive, David was able to penetrate Saul's encampment and take his spear as the king lay sleeping. And when Abishai, Joab's brother, was ready to kill him, David restrained him: "Do not destroy him, for who can put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed? As the Lord lives, none but the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die, or he shall go down in battle. The Lord forbid that I shall put forth my hand against the Lord's anointed."

Here was such faith in God that he could not commit what he felt would be a crime against God's representative. True, this is not the highest ethics, for the pure soul cannot take life, even as stated in the Ten Commandments of Moses, because it is a Law of God, and there is no hate or thought of vengeance in the pure soul, regardless of who the person might be who injures or transgresses. Yet this faith in God acted with great power in David for, relegating punishment to the Father, David was able to remove hatred and vengeance from himself, and enabled him to keep God's Law: "Thou shalt not kill." So that David's lament for Saul was not one of exultation in an enemy's defeat, nor did he make any reference to Saul's enmity and jealousy; only sorrow that the leader of Israel had perished before his foes.

Neither did David cause the death of the supposed bearer of the evil tidings at Mt. Gilboa, as found in the first sixteen lines of Second Samuel, as this is an insertion of a later writer and had no foundation in truth, being merely an amplification of the subject of David's aversion to anyone's killing the Lord's anointed. Rather, David's thoughts were with Jonathan's son, Meribaal, called Mephibosheth, who was crippled on both feet, and David's kindness to him is recorded in the Scriptures.

And David said: "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake? . . . that I may show the kindness of God unto him? (2 Samuel 9: 1 – 3) "And Meribaal called Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, came unto David and fell at his feet. And David said: "Mephibosheth." And he answered: "Behold thy servant." And David said unto him: "Fear not, for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually." (2 Samuel 9: 6 – 7) And David did, eventually, restore to Jonathan's son all that belonged to the house of Saul.

I shall continue to tell about David's kindness of heart in my next sermon.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 15

Received July 28, 1958.

KING DAVID'S FORBEARANCE.

I am here, Jesus.

The sermons I am delivering to you about David, the king, are important in showing readers that warfare and swordsmanship are not everything that characterizes the greatest of the Hebrew kings, but that there was a facet to his behavior which reveals his human love, which is seen in his kindness, his sympathy and his forbearance.

For it, as we turn to those days when David was forced to flee from the wrath of Saul, and lived as an outlaw in the desert country with a band of several hundred men. We see that David was able to maintain himself only through rapidity of action, either to escape or attack, and to obtain food in many cases by a sort of tribute arranged between David and the sheep raisers of the region, whereby the outlaws would not make raids and kill the animals or the shepherds.

Now the Scriptures relate how on one occasion David learned that Nabal, a rich sheep raiser of Maon, with whom David had an understanding, killed some of his sheep as food for the shearers, and to obtain a profit in the sale of the wool. So David dispatched some of his men to obtain food. But Nabal refused, for he had heard that Saul was not far away from Carmel, where his cattle were grazing, and thought that if Saul heard he was providing food to the fugitives, Saul in his wrath might march against him and his possessions.

David, of course, had to depend on these arrangements for food, and if he allowed Nabal to break it, he and his men could not maintain themselves; and so, regardless of Saul and his troops, David marched rapidly against Nabal.

And David said unto his men: "Gird ye on every man his sword." (1 Samuel 25: 13) And they girded on every man his sword, and David also girded on his sword, and there went up against Nabal about four hundred men.

But one of the young men in Carmel told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying:

Behold David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master Nabal, and he flew upon them. But the men had been good to us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we went with them, and when we were in the fields, they were a wall of protection unto us by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master Nabal and his house. . . . (1 Samuel 25: 14 – 17)

Then Abigail, without consulting Nabal, who was inebriated, made ready a considerable amount of provisions, laden on donkeys, and brought them forth to intercept David before he reached Nabal's house. And when she did, she fell before David on her face and presented the laden provisions to him, imploring that he seek not vengeance.

And she said:

Upon me, my lord, be the iniquity. . . and hear thou the words of thy handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, pay any attention to Nabal, who is base as his name indicates. . . . But mine is the iniquity, for I saw not the young man whom thou didst send. . . . See thou, the Lord hast withholden thee from the guilt of blood-letting and taking vengeance with thine own hand. . . Now, therefore, forgive the trespass of thy handmaid, for the Lord will surely make thee an established house, nor shall evil be found in thee. . . . And when the Lord has dealt with thee, bloodshed against Nabal and his house shall not be accounted against thee. . .

And David made answer:

Blessed by the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed by thy discretion, and blessed be thou that hast kept me this day from bloodshed, and from exacting vengeance by mine own hand.... Go up in peace to thy house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice and have accepted thy person.
(1 Samuel 25: 24 – 35)

And David spared Nabal and his house, for though he was very angry, yet he was not deaf to a plea of mercy, because it was made by one who took upon herself the mistake of her husband and showed him a depth of nobility of heart and courage which struck a chord in, and was appreciated by, his own goodness of heart, for had there not been a nobility of soul in David, her pleas would have passed over him in vain. And he also took her coming as a sign from the Father that he should not wreak vengeance with his own hand upon Nabal; and he withheld his sword, for he was mindful of what he considered the Will of God. For because of her nobility of soul he knew that God had sent her, for he knew that such nobility of soul could come only from the Father. For David had that understanding of heart which revealed unto him that the Father was goodness, and that love, and kindness and mercy, generosity, and everything that was noble, was He; and that they came unto man by Him.

And while Nabal was not punished by God, yet his actions towards David and others helped, as they always do, to create conditions evil to him, for soul condition in man attracts spirits of a similar soul condition; and the evil in Nabal's soul drew to him wicked spirits who helped to weave conditions of evil for him. And he feared what both David and Saul might do, and also what might befall him from his own servants who might tremble lest his doings cause their death at the hands of either of these warriors. And in ten days, Nabal succumbed, for his fear produced, at his age, a heart attack. And David thought this was punishment from God, and he was happy that he had stayed his hand.

And David also thought this was a sign from God that he take this noble widow to be his wife, which he did. Abigail was pleased, inasmuch as she could see the generosity of David's heart, and loved him for it. Now Abigail brought with her wealth and property, and helped to give David new prestige in Judea. And his act of forbearance developed conditions favorable to him, and the Father was pleased with David's soul.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 16

Recieved August 1, 1958.

KING DAVID'S LOVE OF HIS REBELLIOUS CHILDREN.

I am here, Jesus.

Yes, I am here once more to continue my story of David, the king, as a man whose innate impulses were good, in that, faith in God, kindness and generosity were in his heart.

I have tried to show that David, in his conduct towards Saul, Jonathan and Abigail, Nabal's wife, revealed a heart in which forbearance and restraint were much in evidence. Through this goodness of action, David gained a respect and popularity which helped to give him the allegiance of hundreds and later thousands of men, all leading towards his accession to the throne of Judah, and ultimately, to kingship of the entire Hebrew nation.

His internal troubles as King resulted from his sinful conduct towards Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah. Evil conditions were thereby attracted to David and to those surrounding him; for as David thus rebelled against the Law of God, so did his sons and officers rebel against the word of David; and Absalom, his son by a daughter of the royal family of Geshur, in Aram, that is to say, a neighboring district in Syria, conceived the plan of ousting his father and becoming king. Because he pertained to royalty on both sides of his family, he considered himself superior to the other sons of David, his father; and, in fact, exacted vengeance himself on Amnon, his half-brother, for the act of defiling his sister Tamar. He then fled to Geshur and lived there with an uncle for three years. David, who loved his children dearly, was very much grieved over this murder and also because he longed for Absalom, who was winsome and dashing, and reminded him in some ways of his own youth.

Absalom, who kept informed of David's frame of mind, was able to enlist his uncle, Joab, in an effort to have him brought back to Jerusalem; and this was accomplished, but David, with his sense of justice, refused to see Absalom's face. This went on for a certain time until the king's

son lost patience and by setting fire to Joab's barley fields, forced him to intercede with David for him; and David relented, and kissed his son as a sign of forgiveness.

For David had suffered very much in this strife, and he realized that Absalom's absence could not bring back Amnon to life. But he did not, or did not wish to, understand that Absalom sought to return to Judea in order to foment civil war against his father, and it was another blow to him when he was told that his son had raised the standard of rebellion against him from Hebron, and was marching towards Jerusalem with a host of soldiers.

But David had faith in the Father and acted in that faith. As in the days of Saul's persecution, he felt that the best policy lay in flight, and to reach a place from which to gather his faithful servants and have time to prepare for battle. Yet even in this critical moment, when things looked bleaker than storm clouds, David did not remain indifferent to the welfare of his followers. His concern for the six hundred Gittites, the Philistines of Gath who became his partisans, is an example of his goodness of heart. For then said David to Ittai the leader, "Why come with us? Return and abide with Absalom, for thou art a foreigner and an exile from thine own place, and thou should not risk thyself and thy people in all the perils and wanderings that now confront us. Therefore, return and take back thy brethren with thee in kindness and truth." (2 Samuel 15: 19 – 20)

And Ittai, with faith in that God which had made him unwanted in his own land, and faithful to his new found king, made answer, "As the Lord liveth, and as the Lord my king liveth, in what place he shall be, whether for death or for life, there also will thy servant be." And David said to Ittai: "Go and pass over the brook." (2 Samuel 15: 21 – 23) And Ittai passed over, he and all his men and all the little ones that were with him. And all the region about Jerusalem wept as the king and the people passed over the Kidron to the mount of Olives, on the way north to the land of Israel.

The priests also came, Zadok and the Levites, bearing the ark of the covenant of God, to take it along in the flight from Jerusalem, so as to have Jehovah the Lord abide with them, as they thought, but David knew that he did not need to seek God in any temple, but that God could be reached with prayer anywhere and had faith that God would answer his prayer, either to deliver him out of the hand of his enemy or, as he thought, to reject him, and in either case David would accept the decision of God. And the king said unto Zadok: "Carry back the Ark of God into the city; if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back, and show me both it and His Habitation; but if He say thus, 'I have no delight in thee,' behold, here I am, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him." (2 Samuel 15: 25 - 26)

And so Zadok and the priests brought the Ark of God back into Jerusalem. And David went up to the mount of Olives, and wept with covered head and bare feet; and those that were with him went likewise. And he instructed Hushai, the Archite, his friend, to remain in Jerusalem and pretend to serve Absalom, so as to bring to naught the evil counsel of Ahithophel, who had conspired with his son against him. And David instructed Hushai to pass all information to the priests, Zadok and Ablathar, who would relay all news back to him. So that Hushai greeted Absalom as king, to serve the son as he had the father.

I will stop now and continue with this subject in my next sermon.

Jesus of the Bible

and
Master of the Celestial Heaven.

SERMON 17

Received August 2, 1958.

KING DAVID, A MAN OF GOD.

I am here, Jesus:

Another instance of David's forbearance is found in preventing Abishai, Joab's brother, from killing Shimei, a man of the house of Saul, when that individual cursed David as he came to the village of Bahurim. Shimei came out of his dwelling, cursing and picking up stones, and cast them at the king and his servants. And thus said Shimei, "Begone, thou man of blood, and base fellow; the Lord has visited upon thee all the blood shed by thee of the house of Saul in whose place thou hast reigned; and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son, and behold, thou art taken in thy own mischief, because thou art a man of blood." (2 Samuel 16: 7 – 8)

What Shimei said, of course, was true, as David was involved in a series of great conflicts, with heavy carnage inflicted both upon the adversaries as well as the Hebrews themselves, and the captives thereof were put to death. And David recognized the truth of Shimei's invectives, and he stayed the hand of his servant. For Abishai said, "Why should this dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." And David replied, "I want nothing to do with such a slaughter, son of Zeruah. Let him curse, for the Lord has put it into his head to curse David. Who then shall challenge Shimei for his words?" (2 Samuel 16: 9 – 10)

For David was not arrogant, but moderate, and he did not seek another's death if it could be avoided, even though he was the ruler of the Hebrew nation and his word was command; for he had learned a lesson from the death of Uriah, the Hittite, whom he had caused to be killed in taking Bathsheba; and he felt that God had brought about blood shed among his own sons in retribution; he was, furthermore, as I have said, naturally kind and forbearing. Thus, in line with the religious ideas of his time, he felt that his dangerous position was due to the action of a God who was avenging Himself for his sins, and he was resigned to what he felt would be God's decision regarding Absalom's revolt. That he was wrong here is due to ignorance in his time, and indeed, in your own, that the Loving Father does not avenge or punish, but that man punishes himself in his own conscience and that this is an existing law in the spirit world.

Hence David said, “Behold, my son, the flesh of my flesh, seeks my death. How much more, then, does this Benjamite seek it? Let him alone and let him curse, for the Lord has so bidden him; and perhaps the Lord will repay me in good the evil which he wishes me in his heart this day.” (2 Samuel 16: 11 – 12)

And so, as David and his men continued their retreat, Shimei went along the hillside with them and continued to throw stones at him and dirt, and cursed as he went.

Now when Absalom was destroyed in the forest of Ephraim, in Jordan, only a few miles south of the birthplace of Elisha, the prophet, and David was returning victoriously to Judah, this same Shimei hastened to Gilgal, just west of the Jordan river, to meet David. And he came with a thousand men of Benjamin, and members of the house of Saul; and he fell down before the king, begging: “Let not the Lord impute iniquity unto me, nor remember what thy servant did so miserably the day that my lord, the king, went out of Jerusalem, for I know that I have sinned and therefore, behold, I am here the first of my house to greet the lord, my king, and seek his pardon.”

But Abishai said to David: “Shall not Shimei be put to the sword for this, in that he cursed and stoned the Lord's anointed?” (2 Samuel 19: 19 – 21)

But if David spared the life of Shimei at the time of his great trouble and bitterness, and when Shimei was stoning and cursing, how much more was David prone to spare the life of this same man in a moment of victory, which he in sincere faith attributed to the Lord? And David replied: “What have I to do with thee, son of Zeruah, that thou be an adversary unto me this day? Shall there be any man put to death today in Israel?”. . . . And David told Shimei: “Thou shalt not die.” (2 Samuel 19: 22 - 23) And here again do we find the noble heart of David, with a sense of mercy and forbearance, that has no equal in his time from a man who acted as the barbarous conditions of his century dictated.

Now before continuing with David, I wish to tell you about the sentence, “What have I to do with thee, ye son of Zeruah?” which was lifted out of the story in the Old Testament and placed by New Testament writers into my mouth as follows: “What have I to do with thee, woman? Mine hour is not yet come.” (John 2: 4) This is what I am supposed to have said at the marriage feast of Cana, according to John, the Evangelist. Needless to say, neither did I make wine out of water, for I was not Dionyseus, the god of the grape, nor did I ever address my mother as “woman.” The sentence was written into this fable because it associates me with King David, my ancestor dating back a thousand years, and the Davidic covenant, of which I am the fulfillment.

The New Testament writers caused a great deal of worry to the early church because of their use of the word “woman”, instead of my saying Mary, or mother. Many writers have tried to justify this word, as it sounds disrespectful to the ear. Well, I wish to repeat that I never said it, nor performed the miracle connected with it. The word “woman” was used in order to parallel the Old Testament construction “son of Zeruah,” that is to say, not to use the name or give the relationship. For you must know that both Abishai and Joab were David's nephews by his sister Zeruah, and as David is reported not to have used their names or called them nephews, so the New Testament writer did not use the name Mary or give the relationship “mother.” I am glad to explain this at this time, and Christians who read this may perhaps realize that these words actually come from Jesus of the Bible, and are the truth.

I want to pass over those events in the rebellion against David that speak of the crudity of those times, and of the conspiracies and battles, but I do wish to mention Hushai, David's friend, who remained in Jerusalem to outwit Ahithophel, the king's counselor who conspired with Absalom; and also to mention Jonathan, David's nephew and Ahimaaz, son of the priest Zadok, who hid in a well in Bahurim, to escape Absalom's scouts and to give David the plans of his rebellious son; also the woman who covered the well with ground corn to foil the pursuers; and Shobi, the Ammonite, and the old patriarch Barzillai, of Gilead, who brought food and equipment to feed David and his men at Mahanaim.

The decisive battle was fought in the wooden area of Ephraim, in what is today Jordan, and Absalom's men were no match for David's mighty men. Absalom's army was commanded by Amasa ben Ithra, an Israelite, who defiled Joab's aunt and David's niece. He and another rebel, Sheba ben Bichri, were killed. Meanwhile David's love for Absalom was undiminished. His first command to his generals was: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, my son Absalom." (2 Samuel 18: 15) And it was a command given publicly, so that the people and soldiers alike would understand the king's wishes.

For if David was merciful enough to spare the life of Shimei, who was an open enemy and of the beaten house of Saul, would he not spare the life of his own son, foolish and ambitious though he be? And David wanted to chastise his son, not to put him to death. And he thought that Absalom might see the light after his defeat, and he was ready to forgive him his trespass, much like the father of the prodigal son, whose parable I taught in my mission as the Messiah. For where there is love, there is mercy, just as the Heavenly Father is all merciful because He loves His children with a Love that surpasses the understanding of humankind, even when these children devise evil and work to the sorrow of the Father. And thus David, in his sorrow and anxiety for his erring son, was showing that mercy and love which showed him to be a man of God.

For the fact is that Absalom's safety meant more to David than did the kingdom. When the runners came to report to the king the news of the battle, his first words were not: "Have I won the day? Am I still king?" But his first words of inquiry, showing the anxiety he felt for his son, were: "Is the young man Absalom safe?" (2 Samuel 18: 29)

And when he heard that Absalom was dead, the king was much moved, and he went up to the room which stood over the archway at the entrance to the town and he wept, crying, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 19: 33)

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 18

Received December 22, 1958.

KING DAVID'S PRAISE OF GOD.

I am here, Jesus.

These sermons on the character of King David, which underlined those episodes showing his essential goodness of heart in the difficult position of being leader of Israel's armies in the nation's wars against her hostile neighbors, have sought to explain why David was designated a man after God's Own Heart. It was precisely for this goodness of heart, which he was able for the most part to maintain in the face of the brutal conditions which prevailed, that he was thus designated.

I am now going to refer briefly to several more instances of David's love of mercy and restraint, and then devote myself to the psalms which have come down to us under his name, for the songs he composed not only dominated the thought of those which were written by others after his time, but also helped to guide many of the others, certainly, in the aspect of thanksgiving to God, which became part of the scrolls of the Dead Sea.

First, I wish to tell you how grieved David was when Abner, General of Saul's forces, was killed by Joab, David's nephew. Abner had slain Joab's brother in the fighting between David and Saul's adherents for possession of the throne of Israel. Later, Abner sought to make peace with David as ruler but, on leaving Hebron after a conference with David, he was slain in a blood vengeance slaying by Joab. The king felt this was treachery, but the customs of the time insisted upon such slayings, not only of the actual slayer, but of his kin, innocent though they might be. It was in obedience to these mores that David delivered up the seven sons of the House of Saul to the Gibeonites, as told in 2 Samuel, Chapter 21, and the seven innocent sons paid the price of their father's actions against these people by hanging. Rizpah's act of devotion in protecting the bones of Aiah, her father, and the other victims, touched David, and he commanded that they be given decent burial in the family sepulchre in Zelah, in the country of Benjamin.

So you see that, as for Joab, nothing could be done by David against him, for the times were barbarous; but David, with higher spiritual insight, understood that this slaying of Abner was wrong, regardless of the customs of the land, and he issued a public statement proclaiming his innocence of Abner's death. He ordered mourning garb for Abner, had him buried in Hebron and personally attended the services. David, weeping at his grave, composed a dirge lamenting his death as a victim of human wickedness.

Joab, of course, was also responsible for the death of Absalom, whom, we know, David loved so tenderly, and Joab's disobedience of the king's specific orders to spare his erring son, by piercing him with darts as Absalom dangled helplessly from a tree, caused a building up of intense resentment which David could never shake off. And with Joab's slaying of Amasa, when the latter was captain of the host of Judah (2 Samuel, Chapter 20), David felt that, while he would not take vengeance against Joab, his successor to the throne should rid himself of one who could cause him great troubles. And so he charged his son Solomon (whom he favored over Adonijah, to please Nathan, the prophet, and Bathsheba), to strike Joab, and also Shimei, whose insults still rankled, when Solomon should become king. Solomon did so, not really as

instructions from David, but because Joab had joined in a movement to crown Adonijah, and because little pretext was needed for the new king to eliminate one who had vilified his father as a member of a rival house.

In these final acts, David's role was surely not a creditable one, regardless of the provocations, but neither was David in his last days of illness and weakness the same person whose nobility of soul glows so radiantly in his many kindnesses to Saul, to Jonathan, to Abigail, to Absalom, indeed to that very Shimei, and to those many others whose faithfulness to him in his straitened circumstances grew out of the seeds of that kindness and mercy which he had showered upon them.

This human love thus characterizing David, the King, in his acts, when viewed in the light of his age and exalted station in life, is perhaps better understood when supplemented by a study of his psalms, which he wrote at various intervals in his life, dating from his days as harpist in the court of King Saul, to his experiences with his enemies from within and without Jerusalem. His principal themes, as could be expected from his life, were praise of God for His Kindness and Mercy, acknowledgment of His Might and Power in the physical universe, and his trust in God, especially when things looked black because of hostile conditions and people. I shall consider these and others as they appear. These Psalms of David, or in which David had his hand, were about seventy in number, all from Book 1, with the exception of Psalm I, and in Book 2, those numbered between 50 and 72, except 66 and 67. The others are scattered about in the other three books, and I shall talk about them as well.

These psalms of David and those added to them by Asaph, his musician, and others, became the hymnbook of the Second Temple built by Solomon, and were a great source of religious inspiration to the people. In fact, the Psalter, or as the Hebrews called it, the Book of Praises, has given great help and consolation not only to Jews, but to Christians for many centuries and have inspired them to greater trust in God and faith in His Mercy.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 19
Received January 2, 1959.

DAVID EXPRESSES HIS CONCEPT OF GOD IN HIS PSALMS.

I am here, Jesus.

The psalms of David, and those written under his inspiration, are songs of many moods—from joy and exultation, to sorrow, penitence and despair. These are songs of praise of God, hope and faith in His Bounty and Mercy, in the soul's knowledge that only faith in God can give man the inner strength to go on in the face of hostile events and circumstances, and count on ultimate deliverance. They are the knowledge which the soul has that God is man's rock of salvation, so that obedient to God's Law to avoid sin, man's place with God will be secure, and further, that God will deliver man out of the evils of the material world because of such faith. These songs were prayers which the soul addressed to God in great supplication and petition growing out of the soul's desperate need for help and assurance. They are songs of thanksgiving for God's Mercy, songs of gratitude and praise, songs of confession of sin and wrongdoing, songs for strength to overcome evil, happiness for Divine companionship, and awareness of renewed strength through God's answer to prayer. And in addition, there are public or national songs of battle and victory, pleas for the nation's delivery in stress of war, hymns of hatred and vengeance against the enemy, and, of course, songs pertaining to court life and celebrations. So that the Psalms are a collection of prayers which fit most every feeling, attitude and aspiration of the human soul.

These psalms, then, are a different phase of the subject which I have been discussing, for while I have up to the present been explaining the Old Testament in terms of man's human love for each other because of his cognizance of God's Laws through the creation of his human soul, the perusal of the Psalms of David and those who followed his lead now take me to a consideration of man's love of God and his relationship to God as the highest living creation of the Father in the material surroundings into which he has been placed. And you will see, as I continue with these sermons, that man's emotional response to God as the living, eternal Creator of the universe, in terms of love, trust and desire to approach closer to God through obedience to the laws of conduct revealed through the Hebrew religious leaders, was a necessary step in the advancement of man's spiritual enlightenment for God to make answer with His Promise of Divine Love as the means of uniting His children with Him in at-onement of soul.

Now David's concept of God was expressed in many ways. He depicted Him, in Psalm 18, for example, as a kind of god of war, or thunder god, who, according to the beliefs of the Semitic tribes, took an active interest in His people or those whom He favored, and delivered them from death in battle or against enemies. And so, in Psalm 18, David wrote that in the danger and uncertainties of battle, his only recourse was to turn to God, in whom he placed all his trust and whom he loved:

I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.
The Lord is my rock, and my fortress,
and my deliverer; my God, my strength,
in whom I will trust; my buckler, and
the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.
(Psalms 18: 1 – 2)

But, of course, the difference between an ancient Fertile Crescent war god and David's God was simply that the latter was a God of righteousness who shows mercy to those who obey His Statutes of ethical conduct:

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
For I have kept the ways of the Lord,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.

For all His judgments were before me,
And I did not put away His Statutes from me.
I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from my iniquity.
(Psalms 18: 20 – 23)

And in his great conviction, David repeats:

Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in His Eyesight.

With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful;
With an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright;
With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure;
And with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward.
(Psalms 18: 24 - 26)

David here meant that adherence to God's laws of righteousness of conduct will create spiritual conditions favorable to the obedient soul, and that baseness of heart will create conditions of darkness in this and in the next world.

But if the reader is shocked to find David praising God for His so-called giving him the "necks of his enemies," (Psalms 18: 40) let me remind you that in David's time, the concept of God did not include mercy for one's enemies, who were to be destroyed as the enemies of God.

And if in time of war and trouble David saw God as coming in thunderclouds and bolts of lightning, in times of peace and meditation he could turn to God as manifested in the grandeur of the heavens, and he could see Him as the Creator of the Universe—the universal God of all natural phenomena:

The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth His Handywork.
Day after day through eternity is this speech of glory declared,
And night after night, at the sight of the moon and the stars
in their courses, have we knowledge of His Laws of the heavens.
(Psalms 19: 1 – 4)

And when David wrote this Psalm, he introduced ideas which show he had some knowledge of Chaldean and other oriental astrology, where he talks of the voices of the heavens, meaning the influences of the planets, with the sun as the ruling body, or as David wrote, the "bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race." (Psalms 19:

5) David, of course, meant that the sun could be likened to a bridegroom coming forth at dawn after a night of sleep; the bride was the moon, whose light reflected that of her consort.

These thoughts may be traced back to the ancient worship of the sun, and later you will find in the Scriptures the use of the word "bridegroom" to indicate God, who is married to His spiritual wife, Israel, His Elect, and you are certainly aware that the Christian theologians borrowed this word to make a "bridegroom" out of me and to have me married to my "bride," the Church. And so David wrote:

There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.
Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoicing as a strong man to run a race.
(Psalms 19: 3 – 5)

But just as God has created the physical universe, so, says David, has He created the soul, and just as the law of the heavens is perfect, so is God's Law for the soul, and the statutes for the human being make a perfect soul. Thus for David, the Creator of the Universe is also the Creator of the spiritual life of man, and the God of Justice and Righteousness:

The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;
The Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart.
The Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
The Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
(Psalms 19: 7 – 9)

Thus David seeks God's help to keep him from sin:

. . . cleanse Thou me from secret faults,
Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins;
Let them not have dominion over me; then shall
I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.
(Psalms 19: 12 – 13)

That David's understanding of his religion was clearly a personal relationship between God and the individual soul, and as such a tremendous influence on the prophets, (especially the writers of the Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah) is very clearly demonstrated in the 32nd Psalm, wherein David sought forgiveness from sin. Suffering in his conscience for evil in deed, David knew of no other way to achieve peace of mind than to come unto the Tabernacle of the Lord, to confess his iniquity and seek His Pardon. A man whose sin is pardoned by God, was, as he thought, blessed. And so he wrote in all earnestness of heart:

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is
no guile.

When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

For night and day Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought
of summer.

I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.

I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;

And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

(Psalms 32: 1 – 5)

David thus felt that if he came to the Lord, and sincerely repenting of his evil deed, sought forgiveness, the Father would not withhold His pardon, and the fact is that by thus turning to God humbly and contrite, David was able to obtain peace, a peace obtainable because of a higher level of soul condition made possible through remorse and penitence.

In Psalm 41, David was ill, and he prayed that God would deliver him from his sickness. He was also keenly aware of his spiritual shortcomings, and prayed that God would heal his soul—that is, would cause him to act and think in accordance with the Commandments of God, so that his soul would be free from sin and wrongdoing. He bemoaned the fact that his enemies would be glad if he were to die. Here David had cause to think of those who had betrayed him when he was forced to flee from Jerusalem, at the time his son Absalom rebelled against him; Ahithophel, his counselor remained behind to welcome Absalom and advise him to attack David at once— advice which, if taken, would have unquestionably resulted in victory for the son and disaster for David. He also thought of Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, whom David kept at his table and loaded with kindness, for he too remained behind to welcome Absalom In the hope of obtaining lands and privileges as grandson of King Saul. Hence David lamented in Psalm 41:

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted;

Which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

(Psalms 41: 9)

Again in Psalm 55, David also complained about the falsity of those who had been in his company, but David always came back to his theme of trust in the Father, to whom he turned in times of stress, and he cried:

And as for me, Thou upholdest me in my integrity,

And settest me before Thy face forever.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from
everlasting unto everlasting.

(Psalms 41: 12 – 13)

At this point I wish to make mention of the use which some churchmen have made of these events in the life of David as reflected in the Psalms which he wrote, for they have been interpreted to mean that David prophesied Judas' betrayal of the Christ about one thousand years later, and this is not true, for, while David had a spiritual understanding of religion beyond his age, he was not able to predict events so far ahead in the future, and indeed, even we spirits of the Celestial Heavens cannot see a century in advance with such detailed accuracy, much less a millenium, but the fact is that human behavior can be predicted on the basis of knowledge of a person's heart, and acts of ingratitude are being constantly recorded as a result of deplorable soul conditions. As for the analogies when made between Ahithophel, Mephibosheth and Judas, let me state here that they are untenable, for Ahithophel was unsuccessful, his advice being rejected in favor of Hushai's counsel, totally different from the consequences of Judas' action, even though both took their own lives. The case of Mephibosheth was, of course one of ingratitude without further ado. To believe the notion that David foresaw the events which took place during my ministry on the basis of his own experiences is to create the reefs before which many rational men pause on reading the New Testament account of my life and mission.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 20

Received January 3, 1959.

DAVID'S SECOND PSALM DOES NOT ALLUDE TO JESUS.

I am here, Jesus.

In the last sermon I have been considering the Psalms of David from the point of view of an intimate approach of man to the Father, wherein God is essentially seen not as the early tribal and community deity in which the individual soul is submerged in the conception of a national god, but wherein the human being, in his own right as a living entity, turns to His Maker and seeks from Him that consolation, that love, that power to help him combat evil in his soul, and, through prayer and more elevated ethical conduct, shows his trust in the Father to strengthen him in his daily struggles in a grim existence and delivers him from those enemies and hostile forces with which he needs must contend and overcome to survive.

Thus I have pointed out how David viewed the Father— from a storm god of war and battle, helping his chosen people, the Hebrews, to the God of righteousness abhorring evil and sin, to a God who is King and Creator of the universe. Eventually it was the concept of God as lawgiver for the attainment of the perfect soul through right conduct towards one's fellowman

and trust in the Father's Mercy that we come to David's finest attitude towards God, with the insight, all the more remarkable that it is evident centuries before the great prophets, that God is God not only of the physical universe and of nations, but also of the human being, of the individual soul which He has created, and that this human being is important to God, and is watched over and cared for by God, to whom he can turn in time of stress and seek His Protection. It is true, of course, that such superstitions still existed in David's reign, for David was not entirely free from the prevailing ideas of his time. But the fact that a higher and more ethical view is manifest in his Psalms is a lasting tribute to his deep understanding of God and true religion.

Within this framework, David thought of himself as the Lord's anointed; that is to say, God's representative on earth as the ruler of His chosen people. In this way, David actually considered himself the Messiah, in that to David "messiah" simply meant king of God's people, with the mission of establishing this people as the foremost nation in the then civilized world, and bringing the word of God to the heathen. With God as his helper, he felt that he could not be defeated in warfare with people to whom God was not known.

This, then, is the meaning of Psalm 2, which is really the first of the collection. It was written when David as king had conquered a succession of enemy forces, both Philistine and Trans-Jordanian, and he felt secure that as Jehovah's anointed king, no force could withstand his power. He attributed his victories to God, and has Him say, "I have my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalms 2: 6) as he declared, "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son. This day have I begotten thee." (Psalms 2: 7) This statement, I must say, was one which David in his psalm puts into the mouth of God, so to speak, and it referred to himself. It did not, as some have erroneously thought, allude to me in any way.

David then has God add that He will give him the pagan for his inheritance, and that God will destroy them with a rod of iron, and dash them to pieces. Thus you see that David, in this Psalm 2, spoke like the soldier he was. Never could I have spoken, nor ever did I speak, of destruction and death by brutal force, for I came to bring to mankind the Father's Divine Love and peace to all His children, regardless of race or creed, and I substantiated my words of Love with healing the lame and the halt. I did not come to destroy men's bodies with sword and spear, but to heal their souls as I did their flesh, and yet many there are who, calling themselves Christians and who profess to know me, are ready in their mistaken zeal to prove their contention that this psalm is Messianic, and to attribute to me a destructive intent which they know in their hearts could not have possibly been entertained by their Christ.

David goes on to warn the pagan kings bordering on Israel to take heed— to discard their own false gods and to serve the Hebraic Jehovah with fear. He tells them to pay homage to him, David, for, as God's anointed king of Israel, he is God's son, and warns them not to provoke him to wrath, lest they be exterminated by God in His anger. The last line, "Blessed are they that put their trust in Him," was not written by David, but inserted later as a more peaceful and appropriate ending.

David, then, considered his enemies to be God's enemies, for we have said he regarded himself as God's representative on earth to decimate the heathens and their worship of pagan gods— a practice, David felt, the Lord wanted eliminated, so that all mankind would turn to Him. David thus felt he was fighting God's wars— holy wars—and his extermination of the enemy was due in great measure to this belief. That is why David's humanity did not extend to

people outside his own, and explains what otherwise seems like a great contradiction between his actions as an individual and his orders as king of the Hebrew nation. This attitude towards conquered enemies was, one must remember, not peculiarly David's convictions, but was rooted deeply in Hebrew tradition, going back to Deuteronomy (Chapter 7: 2.) "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them."

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 21

Received January 4, 1959.

DAVID REGRETS THE INJUSTICES EXISTING IN HIS REIGN

I am here, Jesus.

I wish to continue with my sermons on the Psalms of David and those which were continued under his influence, to show how the Hebrews turned to God for trust and strength to overcome the threats and struggles of the earth life, and for consolation in his hours of bereavement.

Blended with the different religious themes that make up the diversity of the Psalms is an awareness of man's responsibility for ethical dealings and conduct towards one another in the Hebrew nation as children of the Living God, who demands righteousness and morality. David himself could testify eloquently to the perversity and wickedness he saw in his own court, and he could—and did—confess to his own wickedness in his dealings with others, as his treatment of Uriah the Hittite so regretfully reminds us, yet his penitence made him feel free to denounce social injustice such as he could see it in his own domain—oppression of widows and of the fatherless, murder and exploitation of the poor. He understood that God loves righteousness and in fact he could write of Him: "His countenance doth behold the upright." (Psalms 11: 7)

In Psalm 10 David bewailed the social evils about him:

The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor;
Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. . . .
His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud;
Under his tongue is mischief and vanity.
He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages;
In the secret places doth he murder the innocent;
His eyes are set against the poor.

He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den;
He lieth in wait to catch the poor. . . .
(Psalms 10: 2 – 9)

David thus expresses his sympathy for the lowly and the downtrodden and he bade God shield the poor from those who sought to exploit them. And he prayed to Him that He succor the poor who, he felt, ". . . committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art the helper of the fatherless." (Psalms 10: 14) And again in Psalm 9:

The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed;
A refuge in times of trouble.
And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee;
For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee. (Psalms 9: 9 – 10)

As a matter of fact, David wrote of these injustices because he had not been, in his reign, one to undertake the administration of justice in his realm with the firm hand which the times warranted, and David knew in his heart that he had not done that which a real monarch should have done to guarantee equal justice in his land. The truth is that David had devoted himself primarily to strengthening the Hebrew nation against hostile neighbors, and his main concern had been to establish his kingdom on a firm footing militarily, to instill the other powers on his frontiers with fear of the Hebrew and his Deity, Jehovah, and in this respect he had triumphed in an amazing way; and so great, indeed, was this triumph that David felt that he owed his victory, as I said previously, to the power of God.

David realized that he was unable to undertake the task of reorganizing the duties of government and their functioning for the betterment of his subjects, and he regretted this inability. It cost him dearly, too, for one of the claims made by Absalom was that it was he who considered the welfare of the people and not David, and this idea enjoyed considerable currency at the time of the revolt against him.

And again, David's efforts in time of peace was to prepare for war, and his census of the people, which was unpopular and caused him considerable embarrassment through a plague that followed, was instituted with a view to getting an estimate of the number of troops he could have at his disposal in the event of further hostilities.

So that when David wrote psalms about justice in the realm, one can feel the note of regret or frustration with which they are written; justice is looked upon as a sort of ideal which will be dispensed by God, and not by David, His ruler. More in line with his own convictions and closer to his nature, religion was for him something to be worked at, not only as his own relationship to God was concerned, but also as the relationship which God and His people, the Hebrews, were assumed to maintain. Therefore David was concerned with a Temple for his people, which he was unable to construct because of the effort and treasure that went into the wars that made Israel a nation to be reckoned with at the time.

Now David was aware of these limitations and defects in his rule, especially in the area of the administration of justice, but he wrote of them just the same as a theme that could not be ignored and because that theme was one which had an important part in his concept of the

Father, the God who demanded justice and righteousness from great and small, from ruler and ruled, from rich and poor alike.

Jesus of the Bible
and
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SERMON 22
Received March 10, 1959.

DAVID'S VIEWS OF THE AFTERLIFE.

I am here, Jesus.

In my last sermon I have indicated briefly from some of the psalms how David really regretted that justice under his administration was something which had not been achieved with success because the efforts of establishing a strong kingdom had withdrawn his energies from the domestic Issues.

In this sermon I wish to show you that David, while intensely alive to the problems of his kingdom, and of the importance of moral living as adhesive to the covenant which the Father had, as he understood, made with the patriarchs of his people, was nonetheless deeply concerned with the problem of death. Psalm 16 introduces this theme to the singers of the Psalms and Hebrew worshippers who, because of their faith in God, could not dissociate the idea of existence after mortal death, with the thought that right conduct according to His Commands must be rewarded, if not in the material world, then in another to come, and that this applies to those who violated His Statutes with appropriate punishment.

Of course, the conception of immortality is a very complex one, and runs into the human consciousness for ages; other civilizations prior to the Hebraic were also concerned with death and afterlife, and it must not be supposed that David was either an innovator or that, as some commentators of the Psalms consider, serious writers on this subject could not have been composed amongst the Hebrews except by the prophets centuries after David's time. You must understand, however, that many hands were at work after David and his composers at court had completed their songs, and that additions and revisions continued unabated, very often with material contrary to what David had said or thought, simply because new ages brought with them fresh ideas, and these mingled with the original songs to give a confused picture of what these psalms first were.

Such a mingling is to be found in Psalm 16, and the language is not always David's, but we need not hesitate to credit David with expectation of life after the mortal demise:

I have set the Lord always before me;
because He is at my right hand;
I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices:
my flesh also shall rest in hope.
For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt
Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption.
Thou wilt show me the path of life: In Thy Presence
Is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures
forevermore. (Psalm 16: 8 – 11)

One need not be surprised at such ideas in David's songs of praise to God. The early Hebrews had never really given up their primitive cult of the dead, although this was frowned on by the prophets as inconsistent with complete devotion to Jehovah. The Hebrews had their Sheol, or pit of the dead, and their rephaim, or wraiths of the departed. It was natural for David to conceive of the afterlife in this manner and he thought of it with repugnance. He knew, too, that Saul had sought the shade of Samuel and that the latter had actually appeared to make his prediction. This is a phenomenon which you realize actually happened, and that the woman of Endor was merely a medium whose activities were prohibited because Hebrews at that time were much given to the raising of "familiar spirits."

David's meditations on this subject also included knowledge that Enoch, in the Book of Genesis, had been translated into heaven without suffering physical death, a sort of assumption attributed much later to Elijah, the Prophet of Israel, and in the Christian age, to my mother, a piece of pious credulity which, I must tell you, she most heartily deploras. As for the date of the Book of Genesis, which of course was written down in final form centuries after the death of David, let us understand that there were extant many fragments and sources upon which the editors could depend for information, and the reference to Enoch was among these.

Now David, as we know, considered himself God's anointed, and therefore, His "holy one" who represented Him on earth. In his psalm, therefore, David felt that the Almighty God who had stretched forth his hand, as David thought, to insure him a great Hebrew nation, might in the same way extend to him, as He had to Enoch, a translation into Heaven without seeing corruption, to live with Him forevermore in Paradise.

Christians, to be sure, have commonly considered Psalm 16 as Messianic, and the verses, ". . . for Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption," are for them an allusion to me, their Christ. They believe this represents a prophecy as to my resurrection to physical life after my death. They believe that I left my father's tomb in the same body which had died on the cross. In this, however, they are mistaken for, as I have previously explained in a message through Mr. Padgett, I rose in a body drawn from the elements after dematerializing the one which had been destroyed.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 23

Received: April 10, 1959.

JESUS EXPLAINS PSALM 18.

I am here, Jesus:

I wish now to discuss Psalm 18, which also appears in Second Samuel, Chapter 22, under the title "David's song of deliverance." The writer affirms that "the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul."

Now this psalm is an important one, because It shows David realizing in what a desperate plight he had been placed, first by Saul, and then by other enemies, and how he attributed to God his salvation from these foes. There are differences in language between this song as it appears in the Book of Samuel, and as it stands in the Psalter that will enable you to understand more fully that David's writings were constantly being revised by others, so that critics are often led to believe that these psalms were not written by David. In addition, the themes which the king treated were frequently expanded and elaborated upon by psalmists who lived long after him, so that his thoughts and emotions were projected through these men into ages far beyond his own, enabling us to perceive the tremendous force which David exerted upon centuries of later Hebrew thought. It was as acknowledgment of this influence upon them that later psalmists wrote their songs under the title "A psalm of David."

Chapter 22, of Second Samuel, can very easily be read by anyone who has in his possession a copy of the Old Testament, but for my purpose tonight I wish to quote some of the verses therein contained:

. . .The Lord Is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
The God of my rock; in Him will I trust:
He Is my shield, and the horn of my salvation,
my high tower and my refuge. . . Thou savest me from violence. . . .
When the waves of death compassed me,
the floods of ungodly men made me afraid;
The sorrows of hell compassed me about;
the snares of death prevented me;
In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God;
And he did hear my voice out of His temple,
and my cry did enter into His ears.
He sent from above, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters;
He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that

hated me; for they were too strong for me.
(2 Samuel 22: 2 – 18)

If you will compare the versions of the same psalm, one given in the Second Samuel, and the other in the Psalter, you see that the latter contains the first line "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength," and words like buckler, "sorrows of hell," "my strength," repeated several times. On the other hand, the version in Second Samuel omits the first line, but adds "and my refuge," to "high tower," and also "Thou savest me from violence," in line 4. I might tell you that the version in the Second Samuel is more authentic, but that both contain things that David never said. For example, we read in both versions: "He heard my voice out of His Temple." Well, there was no temple in David's lifetime, for the Temple was not built until Solomon reigned, but there was a tabernacle, and that was David's word. However, as the psalms were being revised, the word that best fit the times was used, and "temple" replaced "tabernacle." Thus you get some idea of how difficult it is to determine what is David's, and what is not, so that while critics have been doing an earnest work of reconstruction, one should not be ready to accept their conclusions as accurate.

PSALM 18 (A Song of Victory)

I WILL love thee, O Lord, my strength.
The Lord Is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, In whom I will trust;
My buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.
I will call upon the Lord, Who is worthy to be praised:
So shall I be saved from mine enemies.
The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of
ungodly men made me afraid.
The sorrows of hell compassed me about:
The snares of death prevented me.
In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God:
He heard my voice out of His Temple,
and my cry came before Him, even into His ears.
He sent from above, He took me,
He drew me out of many waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from them which hated me:
For they were too strong for me.
(Psalms 18: 1 – 6, 16 – 17)

Now I am not interested in doing this work, for my object is rather to show David's love of the Father through his writings, just as I have shown his kindness to people in his behavior as king. Regardless of the differences, one thing stands out forcibly: his trust in the Father in time of trouble. This great faith in God was expressed many times in his psalms, and I repeat, it was reworked by other psalmists in later times.

One of these psalms is Psalm 22, which has caused considerable excitement and confusion among Christians, as they think it is a prophecy which David is supposed to have made concerning my crucifixion. In fact it purports to be a vision of this event in my life:

PSALM 22

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.
All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him:
Let Him deliver him, seeing He delighted in him.
Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.
Many bulls have compassed me:
Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.
They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.
I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint:
My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd; And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me;
they pierced my hands and my feet.
I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.
They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.
(Psalms 22: 6 – 8, 11 – 18)

Now this sounds very much like a prophecy, especially in certain details of "counting his bones," the piercing of hands and feet, and the casting of lots for garments. Actually, however, the writer sought to imagine himself in the place of David and depict the king's plight, rather than to imitate the description of Jehovah's might in coming to David's aid in Psalm 18 (David's Song of Deliverance). Here the writer was inspired by Second Samuel, (Chapter 21), which tells of David's grave danger in battle against the Philistines:

"Moreover, the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines; and David waxed faint."

"And Ishbi-benob, which was of the sons of the giant (Goliath of Gath). . . he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David."

"But Abishai the son of Ner succored him, and smote the Philistine. . . . Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, "Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel." (2 Samuel 21: 15 – 17)

This moment of dire peril, in which the aging David found it no longer possible to fight actively in warfare, was the one chosen by the psalmist to portray David's fears and feelings. The writer, as was frequent among ancient Hebrews, was given to poetic fancies and imagery, such as the bulls of Bashan, which, of course, meant the strong enemy soldiers, or being poured out like water, that is, completely exhausted by exertion, his heart melting in his bowels, and his

tongue clinging to his jaw, meaning growing faint with fear and paralyzed, of the fierce enemy the dogs compassing him, that is to say, ready to deliver the finishing blows.

In the same chapter, the story of the hanging of Saul's family by the Gibeonites, as approved by David, gave the writer the idea of the piercing of the hands and the feet, and the counting of the bones, and the bones being out of joint, and the staring of bystanders at the victim. Saul and his sons, including Jonathan, had been hanged by the Philistines after the battle of Gilboa, when the latter found them on returning after the battle to strip the slain of their raiment. The slaying of wounded after combat and the casting of lots for the garb and armor of the defeated foe was an old custom among these people as well as the Hebrews—certainly for a thousand years and more before it was practiced by the Romans. The writer of this so-called prediction had in mind what David must have been thinking of were he to have been killed and hanged by the Philistines. There was no conception of a crucifixion in the imagery of the writer, and much less a prophecy of a Messiah's death.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 24

Received: July 12, 1959.

CHURCH SACRIFICES EXPLAINED DURING KING DAVID'S TIME.

I am here, Jesus.

In this sermon I wish to speak to you about David's attitude towards Temple sacrifices. There are many expressions in the Psalms indicating that David did not look with favor on them, and there are just as many statements to the contrary: that David wholeheartedly supported the Temple sacrifices. Many writers there are, and have been, who believe David never wrote verses either for or against them, and that their presence proves that David never wrote these Psalms, or any other.

Now the first thing we must know is that Judaism in David's time was nationalistic and deistic—that is to say, that the Jews were concerned first with the tribes as a nation and that God meant the God of the Jewish nation, that He had chosen and delivered from bondage in Egypt and whose destiny He was directing. If you will turn to your Book of Exodus and review the Ten Commandments given by God to the people through Moses, you will see that they are all laws of conduct, morals and ethics, and that provision for offerings (Exodus 20: 24 – 25) is made in passing, the important instruction being that the altar be made of earth or natural stone, and not constructed by tool or hewn.

The building of a tabernacle, and later the construction of the great Temple of Solomon, or the second temple after the Exile, was something new and unknown to the Hebrews of Moses' time; it was a much later development dependent upon the circumstances that arose with the passing centuries. In the same way, the concept of sacrifices changed radically with time. To all peoples of the ancient world, sacrifices were vital. They were offered to the various gods who, to those peoples, controlled their lives and their stability—war gods, fertility goddesses of agriculture and growth, and others taken from the physical universe—the sun god especially, the moon goddess and those of the heavens. These all had to be offered for fear of incurring their wrath—and defeat in war, famine and storms were all attributed to those gods. Now Abraham understood the existence of God, because to Abraham, the deity meant a God of ethics and human behavior. Therefore, he had an inkling that man had a soul, an entity within him that stood for morality and right living. Abraham had this inkling as a gift, an intuitive gift, and not the result of reasoning. And while he sacrificed to God, he realized that such sacrifices should be restricted to animals, and that humans slain for that purpose was an abomination unto Him. Thus began the trend towards reviewing sacrifices, and, as time wore on, especially after the Hebrews established themselves in Canaan, and the principle of religion became centered more and more on righteousness of conduct and the overcoming of evil and the vicissitudes of life through faith in God, men began to become progressively more critical of sacrifices and their utility. The prophets, in general, stressing righteousness of heart and thundering again and again against sin and evil, were opposed to sacrifices, or, at best, countenanced them only when offered with a clean heart. And it was only with the Exile In Babylonia and loss of national life did the priests emphasize the need of concentration on the religious aspect of Judaism and the old sacrifices, and brought out to the public the code of minute statutes concerning them.

Thus you see that altars and sacrifices were not at all God-given Commandments but were traditions that experienced changes in accordance with the historical development or fluctuating circumstances to which they were subject.

Now in David's time, the altar was really the Ark placed in a tabernacle which traveled with the people and eventually landed In Jerusalem, stormed by David in battle against the Jebusites who were still sacrificing human beings. The tribes were wont to sacrifice yearly at their tabernacles, such as Shiloh, where Eli, the priest, was visited by Hannah, mother of Samuel, the Prophet. Even in those days, the prophets spoke out to the people that offerings could not atone for evil and sin, for the Lord told Samuel, concerning Eli's wayward sons:

"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons make themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

"And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice and offering forever."(1 Samuel 3: 13 – 14)

Now the Philistines rose up in battle against Israel, killing Eli's sons and capturing the Ark, but because of subsequent plagues, these pagans decided to return the object with suitable offerings to placate the god of Israel, whom they felt responsible for their misfortunes. According to the story — which you realize was imaginary—the good people of Beth Shemesh, where the Ark was returned, joyfully sacrificed unto the Lord. But the only reward from this supposed god of Israel was a slaughter of the villagers (50,070 men, say the Scriptures) because they had looked into the Ark of the Lord. Now all this is found in Samuel I , Chapter 6, and reveals to us the superstitious state of the writer, in that he could attribute to God a wholesale

slaughter for the great crime of supposedly looking into the Ark. It also reveals to us that sacrifices, even offered with the best intentions, were futile, as the poor Beth Shemites could woefully testify according to the story. And more important, the loss of the Ark for seven months, as the Israelites experienced, did not mean destruction of the people following their defeat. Even though Samuel later sacrificed with a burnt-offering and the Israelites won in battle against the Philistines at Ebenezer, and even built (in violation of instructions from Moses) an altar at Ramah, the discrediting of sacrifices inevitably came about because people began to realize they had no relationship to, or influence on, subsequent events.

Now the First book of Samuel, of course, was written by a man of the priesthood, in that it attributes Saul's downfall to disobedience to the rituals, so that he unwittingly wrote things which I now use against his attitude towards sacrifices. Indeed, the entire book is filled with references to those as, for example, Saul inquires about his father's lost asses of Samuel at a time when the people were offering sacrifices in the high places, and Samuel was blessing them (I Samuel 9: 12 – 13) and again, after anointing Saul with oil (I Samuel 10: 1, 8) for the victory over the Ammonites at Jabesh Gilead, Samuel declared God rejected Saul as King of the Jews because he intruded into the priest's office and made peace-and-burnt-offerings, a duty which only a priest could perform. (I Samuel 13: 10 – 14) So you see that even in those days Saul, as King, challenged the authority of the priest, though unsuccessfully to be sure. At the same time, Saul was willing to sacrifice his son, Jonathan, because Jonathan ate when his father had cursed partakers of food. (I Samuel 14: 24, 27 – 28) When told that he had sinned, Jonathan exclaimed:

"My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. If my people had by chance eaten freely, how much more of a slaughter of the Philistines would there have been?" (I Samuel 14: 29 – 30)

Jonathan, you see, was not inclined to believe in the rituals, and yet in the next battle, won a great victory. And then in violation of the strict statute commanding koshering of meat, that is, salted to drain the blood thereof (for the blood was considered the Lord's alone), the people, faint with hunger because of Saul's unreasonable curse, slew the cattle taken from the Philistines, and ate them with the blood— and you may be sure that Jonathan and David were among them. (I Samuel 14: 31 – 32) When Saul discovered Jonathan's sin, he sought to have him sacrificed but the people said unto Saul:

"Shall Jonathan die, -- he who has brought about this great salvation for Israel? God forbid this, curse or no curse; not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has fought on God's side this day." (I Samuel 14: 45)

So the people rescued Jonathan from Saul, his father, and the Hebrews went on to many victories. Saul's final rejection as King is supposed to be his sparing of the life of Agad, King of the Amalekites. Samuel had ordered him, in God's name, to kill him because of his cruelty to the Hebrews. You must understand that such an order never came from the Father, but that Samuel, filled with fury against the brutal foe, thought it did. Saul's downfall resulted not from such a merciful act as sparing an enemy's life, but from a progressive nervous disorder which proved fatal for Israel at Mt. Gilboa.

From all this you can readily see that David, connected intimately as he was with these events, realized, as Jonathan did, that the prohibitions and sacrifices had no efficacy. Jonathan, we saw, his best friend, violated them, and so did the people. The Hebrews were very practical, considering the superstitious nature of the day, and many of them, and David included, had an

instinct that told them that such statutes were made to be violated and were meaningless with regard to their relationship to God.

But when David became King, and his obligations included being the custodian of the national religion, his outlook towards the religious ceremonies underwent a change, and he wanted to see a well-ordered ritual, not for any belief in their efficacy, but for the outward signs connected with the religion and their resultant aid to the nation's stability, and for something for the people to hold to. One of the things David wished to do on capturing Jerusalem from the Jebusites was to bring the Ark to his new capital. The story of Uzziah's death for touching the Ark has no historical veracity and was inserted later by a priestly minded editor who reechoed in one man the so-called disaster to the Beth Shemites. David really danced before the Lord when the Ark was placed in the tabernacle constructed for that purpose, and he himself conducted the services, making the peace-and-burnt-offerings before the Lord. He then blessed the people in the name of God.

Thus, you see that David did exactly that for which Saul, you remember, had been rejected in wrath by Samuel, who said he had spoken for God. You realize that Samuel really spoke out for his own manner of thinking and, in the course of time, the old views were replaced and men were permitted to do what before had been considered abomination. In the Psalms of David may be seen the King's suspicions and disbelief in the sacrifices and their efficacy, but also his later desire that they be continued for form's sake and national purposes. These opposing views are found in the later Psalms and also in the writing of the prophets.

Here are some of these divergent views in the Psalms on the sacrifices in Judaism. David did write a psalm of contrition after his trespass with Bathsheba which, with the many alterations and interpolations inserted by later hands, has come down to us as Psalm 51. Here stands David's knowledge that, not sacrifices, but repentance for sin, are the valid offerings before the Lord:

“For thou delightest not in sacrifices; else would I give it; Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” (Psalms 51: 16 – 17)

After David's death, priests took hold of this psalm and added the following verses, favorable to their views:

“Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion; Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then wilt Thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, In burnt-offering and whole burnt-offerings; Then wilt they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.” (Psalms 51: 18 – 19)

The wall known as the "Wall of Jerusalem" was built by Solomon and this addition to the psalm was written at this time.

Again, in Psalm 50, the writer has David say that God expresses His dissatisfaction with sacrifices in favor of thanksgiving unto Him and faith, and seeking Him in time of trouble for deliverance:

Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?
Offer unto God the sacrifices of thanksgiving;
And pay thy vows unto the Most High;
And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.
(Psalms 50: 13 – 15)

This attitude towards vain religious sacrifices had great advocates among many of the prophets, and in time I shall turn to this subject again, for as Christianity stands today it cannot be dissociated from my coming, and is something which must be shown to be completely without connection as regards my being the Christ.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 25

Received July 21, 1959.

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

I am here, Jesus.

The 23rd Psalm is the one that is best loved and remembered of all the odd 150 psalms that we possess, before mention is made of those which have been brought to light through the recent Dead Sea Scroll discoveries. It is the one that is most concise, most poetic, and most inspirational, and this means not only for the Hebrew people, but for all others where the Old Testament is a part of religious heritage.

This 23rd Psalm is also the one that best represents David and what he means in Old Testament religion. It has been closely associated with him through the ages because he has been the one who more than any other reminds us of the peaceful, bucolic life which was his as shepherd and which many of us seek and have sought but cannot attain because of the vexations, frustrations and turmoil of material existence. It is a dream, an ideal, and some of us have an idea, somewhere in one's mind and heart that, eventually, that ideal will become tangible and that man will at some time lie down and rest, at peace with himself and his God.

This feeling of peace is a perfume which seems to come forth from the words of this psalm, and it owes its fragrance to an absolute and undying faith in God. However, in the Old Testament, one will not find a stronger burning faith in actual life than that which David manifested in his times of woe and affliction, and which made possible the fiber of his life and strength which he drew and absorbed through prayer and faith in the Father, and it is the 23rd Psalm, with its simple, straightforward words, which provides that overwhelming sense of sincerity and links it so irresistibly to David, the shepherd, and to David, the King, unafraid of enemy and death alike, because, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." (23rd Psalm, verse 4).

This inner feeling that knew the Presence of God— not within David's soul— but all about and at his side, summarizes more than anything else the great truth of the Hebrew religion— that the God of Israel was alive and present with David, helping him in his trials and seeking to straighten his paths because David had acknowledged Him, and strikes a deep and reverberating chord in the heart of everyone who has faith in the Father and trusts with complete trust that as God was present with David and helped him, so it is with him, and that God is close and lighting the way for him to go forward in the march of life.

And as David knew that the soul lives on, because he believed that Saul did communicate with the departed Samuel, and because his faith in God gave him an insight and an assurance of the afterlife which lesser believers cannot grasp nor understand, David was convinced that God would welcome him into the other world of life, set a table before him, such as conceived out of his own experiences, and anoint him king of the Jews there, as he had been ruler of the Hebrew nation on earth: “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (Psalms 23: 5 – 6)

The beauty and inspiration of the 23rd Psalm, then, are incontrovertible and enduring, and I know that you all realize that this is so, but I want you to know more about this psalm. I am going to tell you that the first three stanzas are not of David's pen, but, while they are close to what we feel to be David's feelings, yet they are the product of later ages. These opening stanzas of the psalm read:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still water.
He restoreth my soul;
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness,
for His name's sake. (Psalms 23: 1 – 3)

No, David did not write this, but we feel that he must have because we think that David must have felt in such a mood many times. Actually, David never could have conceived of God as a shepherd, for the simple reason that he could never imagine God to be in a situation such as he had found himself, and because, to David, God possessed the sublimity and majesty of the Creator of the universe. It is only with the prophets that this idea of God and His relationship to Israel became established. It first appears In Isaiah, (40: 11): “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd,” and again in Jeremiah, (23: 3 – 4): “And I shall gather the remnant of my flock . . . And I shall set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them.”

The three verses of the psalm also reflect the inspiration of Ezekiel, the prophet of the Exile. In Chapter 34: 11 – 14, 15, we read: “For, saith the Lord, Behold, even I, will both search my sheep. . . and seek them out . . . and feed them . . . And I will feed them in a good pasture . . . and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock and cause them to lie down.”

How close this is in contents and language, though not in conciseness of style nor rhythm, can very well be seen from the opening stanzas of the 23rd Psalm, which I have just quoted above.

To now continue, David is perhaps the outstanding example of the Hebrew who prays the Lord to lead him in the path of righteousness, as he did, for example, in Psalm 5, where verse 8 reads: "Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness." In the 23rd Psalm, verse 3, however, yet another phrase has been added here which takes us to a later age: "for His Name's sake," and this is something I wish to explain.

It was Ezekiel, alone, who preached that God would restore the Hebrew exiles from Babylonia, not because of any repentance on the part of Judeans, but because God would not suffer His Name to be used as a reproach by Gentiles. Ezekiel saw the pagans scorning the God of Israel because the Hebrews had been defeated and exiled, asking them ironically where was their God who had permitted such a disaster to overtake His people. Hence Ezekiel felt that God would protect His Own Name (or reputation) and show the pagans His Power by restoring to His people what He had taken from them as punishment for sin. There are many expressions of this type in the Book of Ezekiel.

With this, I now want to tell you that I preached the 23rd Psalm during my ministry when in Palestine, with the Divine Love of the Father as the fulfillment of the righteousness sung by the psalmist. This psalm can be interpreted, of course, as it has been, first as the nostalgia for the countryside and its tranquility away from the cares and vexations of city life. It means that longing to be alone with God's Creation so as to have a chance to shed from one's soul the crassness of the earth plane and its activities, and, in the retreat of nature, commune with God and purify one's heart.

But it also has a more spiritual interpretation. The still waters and the green pastures to which the Shepherd leads his flock are the Torah, the books of instruction in God's Ways, which have been and still are the essence of the Jewish religion and, as the way to the moral and ethical life, cannot be surpassed. Thus, says the psalmist, the man filled with the spirit of righteousness need not fear death, and while here we do not have any consciousness of a resurrection such as taught by Christianity, yet there is wonderful faith that man's soul survives death and exists in a place prepared for it by the Father. I made mention of this in my teachings, referring as I did to the many mansions of my Father. The psalmist had great spiritual insight when he concluded the psalm with the vital words, ". . . and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

When I taught this psalm, I taught that the green pastures and the still waters were the Divine food and drink through which the soul could achieve not merely restoration, but transformation into a divine soul. I preached that the pastures and waters, or food and drink, to which I referred as the bread and waters of eternal life, were really symbolic of the Father's Love, which was available to all those who would partake thereof through sincere and earnest prayer. I preached that not merely purity of soul was involved, enabling man to achieve the human perfection of soul and the highest place in the Spiritual Heavens, but that when the psalmist wrote: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want;" those words meant that I could have my everlasting fill of His Substance—His Divine Love—and that my soul could be fed throughout all eternity through and by His Love.

And when he mentioned the preparation of a table in the presence of my enemies and the anointing of "my head with oil," it meant that I was to be the spiritual king, Master of the Celestial Heavens, and that any act against me in material life would not avail, and, that come what may, I would accomplish my mission, which I did when It came into my soul, bringing the Father's Love into the soul of mankind and making available to mankind His Divine Love and

life of the soul forever. I did not see in the phrase "in the presence of my enemies," any indication of vengeance for what these might accomplish against me, although I know that such was the intention of the psalmist. But I could see in it the hope that these enemies would eventually in spirit life understand their mistake and atone for it by seeking the Father's Love and loving him whom they had previously pierced.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 26

Received July 21, 1959.

HOSEA'S AWARENESS OF THE FATHER'S LOVE.

I am here, Jesus.

I wish to turn now from the discussion of the earlier psalms, and open the books of the prophets. Here is where we have the essence of what is most noble in the Jewish religion, in that it elevates religion to a sublime cult of righteousness, ethical conduct and morality, not only for the nation, but also for the individual. To a considerable degree, they go hand and hand with, stimulated and motivated by, the laws of the Pentateuch, the legal instruments that provide and are the practical application of the standards set up by the prophets.

Now from David to Hosea is about 250 years. I want to pass over the work of Solomon and the construction of the First Temple as a different aspect of Judaism from which I am presently discussing; namely, the development among the Hebrews of the human love as the forerunner of the Divine Love and my coming as the Messiah of God.

Although Amos was really the first of the prophets of the Northern Kingdom of Israel after its separation from Judah, I am going to begin with Hosea, son of Beerai, for in him, for the first time clearly expressed, is knowledge that God loves His chosen nation, or son, Israel, with a Love not as the human being loves God or his fellowman, as the first commandment of Moses reads, but with the Divine Love of the Father for His children. I want you to see and know with complete conviction in your soul that I did not come as the Messiah to bring to mankind something new and revolutionary, but as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. I came to make the Divine Love—already known by Hosea as overflowing in God more than 750 years before my coming—the great instrument of salvation and a reality, and available to all men, both Jews and Gentiles alike, and this through prayer for the Divine Love of the Father. I was the Messiah of God in that the Divine Love which men could dimly perceive in the love and forgiveness of Joseph in Egypt, in the kindness and faithfulness of Ruth, Naomi and Boaz, and in the sure

mercies of David, the Divine Love, I repeat, became in me a portion of the Father's Glory dwelling in my own soul, absorbing into its Essence my own humanness, and making of it a part of the Living Attribute of the Father. Through realization that the Father's Love was present, and could be possessed by me if I sought for It earnestly in prayer, I did so constantly and through the knowledge and insight which I attained with prayer, and with constantly increasing Divine Love in my soul through prayer, I became aware that I was the Messiah in that I was the first human to possess a soul filled with the Essence of the Father's Divine Love.

Now the beautiful qualities of love, and forgiveness and faithfulness which we find in the Scriptures concerning Joseph and Ruth, came to mankind through the pen of others as stories, and in the Chronicles about David we have a biography written by other hands, although some of these were quite close in time to David's lifetime. In the Psalms, I have already explained that many editors and priests revised and rewrote the Psalms so that it is hard to dissect accurately what is actually David's and what is owing to others. But, in the case of Hosea, his writings deal directly with himself, his intimate family life, and his visions as a prophet of Israel.

Hosea was a man of great sensitivity and spirituality and the sufferings he incurred as a result of marriage to a wayward woman, Gomer by name, made him turn to God as a means of consolation, for he really loved Gomer and was desolate because of her eyes for other men. And God did give him solace, and he was made to understand that, just as his wife through faithlessness caused him (Hosea) agony of soul, so did the faithlessness of Israel, God's chosen people or bride, caused the Father sorrow and unhappiness. But, as in the case of Joseph and his erring brothers, Joseph, because of his love, forgave those who had sinned against him. And as God forgives His chosen one, Israel, so must Hosea forgive his faithless Gomer. And Hosea did, indeed, forgive her, and after having sold her into slavery, he repented and redeemed her, putting her on a sort of probation so that she might return as his wife once more after she forsook her lovers.

Now this is not a story, as some commentators of the Scriptures think, but is a true account of how, through prayer and faith in the Father, the prophet Hosea learned to sublimate his grief over an erring wife into a magnificent conception of the Father's Love for Israel, his bride, and attain an inkling of Divine forgiveness. Through his own sorrow, Hosea penetrated with the rarest insight into knowledge that Divine Love existed as the great Attribute of the Father, in that It suffers or rejoices, is quick to mercy and forgiveness, and is ever hopeful that the person which It loves will cease to be separated from It by a return to the Father and a cleansing of the soul through repentance. And the word of God, through His ministers, came to the understanding of Hosea, saying:

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them: They sacrificed unto the Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim [Northern Kingdom] also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: And I was to them as they take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. He [Israel] shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?
How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?
Mine heart is turned within Me, My sorrows are kindled together.
(Hosea 11: 1 – 5, 8)

This is the first time that the Father is represented in Hebrew prophecy as displaying these delicate feelings of love and sorrow, all the more significant since the stress was at the time and long afterwards upon God's supposed wrath and vengeance. Here is a God of Mercy and Compassion, the conception of which was not to prevail until the appointed time of my coming, even though it had been indicated, as I have said, in Hebrew Scriptures, by the stories of Joseph and Ruth, and the personality of David.

Now in the Book of Hosea, this Divine Love of God towards His Israel was not towards an individual, but for the entire nation. The thought that God could love each individual in the nation or that he could possess His Love could not and did not enter the mind of Hosea. For the burning issue of his day, and for centuries or so thereafter, was man's love for God to keep him from sin, and acknowledgement of the Living God to keep him on the path of righteousness.

The prophets sought to keep people from backsliding into paganism, and to seek to keep the rulers of the nation from becoming politically so worldly minded as to neglect morality and the true God. Love, therefore, to God was the great plea of the prophets and not the Father's Love for His children. As I have said, this was the great insight of Hosea.

Now, when I turned to the Book of Hosea, and studied the character of the man, and his love towards his erring Gomer, I was impressed with the thought that it was God's Love for Hosea— an individual—which enabled the suffering prophet to accept Gomer, and that it was His Love for Hosea which sustained him in his griefs and enabled him to attain solace. It was from this, as well as from the glimpse that I had of God's Love for Joseph, Ruth and King David, and from the works of other prophets whom I shall discuss, that I realized that God's Love was flooding the world as a light, whether man was aware of It or not.

Mankind never sought for this Love because, as to them, It was as though nonexistent, and they prayed to God for help in material things, as well as for purification. Therefore, It was not available, but I realized that, If God's Love was present, as I understood It to be, then I should pray for Its possession, which I did, and I became aware of His Soul Love in my own soul. I shall continue with the Book of Hosea in my next sermon.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 27
Received July 23, 1959.

JESUS EXPLAINS HOSEA'S PROPHECIES.

I am here, Jesus.

In my last writing I have shown how Hosea, through personal sorrow, learned that as man loved with a human love, so did the Father love with a Divine Love, and that this Love meant that God sought the return of His erring children, at this period of civilization, His chosen people Israel. It meant that while this return had been made by Israel itself, on free will, yet God would make an effort to teach or educate His children, so that Israel would love the Father. It meant that the lessons in the education might be accompanied by unpleasant experiences. This did not mean that God punishes His children for the evils they committed because punishment is the wages of sin; this cannot be further from the truth. For the Father does not punish, but the people whose nationality and religion were linked inextricably to knowledge of the Living God had to be reminded repeatedly during the centuries that they could not be permitted to become absorbed merely in the material things of life to the neglect of those spiritual things that meant cleanliness of the soul through the ethical and moral life.

The vicissitudes through which the people of Israel thus passed were not punishments of God, although we shall see that the prophets thought they were, but they were the effect produced by causes which were not wholly fortuitous nor developed solely as a result of a blind progression of events or forces. Historical events, I must tell you, are not only the results of a natural working of history—for men, and men's thoughts and deeds, for good or for evil, are the dominating forces in the march of history; the wars, exterminations and similar man-made disasters resulting from human sin, error and perversity overshadow by far the calamities produced by the evolving universe. The troubles encountered by the people of Israel are not, then, to be laid at the door of an angry and punishing God, although I wish to repeat that this was the consensus of opinion among the prophets, who thundered against the evils they saw in Israel.

These actually stemmed from the doings of Solomon and his advisors: his concept of religion as ritual and temple, rather than ethics, his concern for opulence and material pleasures befitting a pagan monarch, his imposition of burdensome taxes upon the people, his marriages to pagan women and consorting with concubines of pagan worship, and encouraging their abominable ceremonies in the Temple devoted to God, all for the purpose of promoting alliances with neighboring states of barbarian ideas and practices, as well for his pleasures, to the neglect of the Father and His Laws.

The chain of events thus led to the ascension of Rehoboam and his foolish acceptance of the counsel given him by his young courtiers, in that he harshly rejected the request of his northern subjects for an easement of their tax burdens, with the result that the Northern Kingdom, Israel, seceded from the rest of the land, and two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, came into existence. Each of these was much weaker politically as separate entities than they would have been as a unified Israel, and the trend to pagan practices in worship, the use of high places, like Dan, and Beth-el, and the consequent successive loss of moral and ethical fiber, and the dissociation from the high faith in the Living Jehovah, were all instrumental in bringing the Hebrews down to the level of the pagan nations and forfeited for them the strength which they needed to maintain themselves against the nations of their time. It was this moral and physical weakness, then, and not any punishment of the Father, which caused the downfall of the Hebrew

nations— first Israel, and finally Judah. The prophets saw the moral evils of the people as the reasons for the buffeting and threats of disaster which faced the Hebrews and with intense love of their people and God, and with wonderful understanding that return to God's Laws would through faith clothe them with His Protection, they thundered powerfully against sin and evil. They supposed God to be a divine avenger of evil, which He could not tolerate, while they were also clearly aware that the policies and doings of the Hebrew Nations themselves were the causes of their own difficulties.

Hosea's prophecies are along these lines. Most of his writings deal with the impending exile from Israel into Assyria, caused by the moral deterioration of the Kingdom. For Hosea prophesied in the days of Jeroboam II (a son of Joash or Jehoash, the grandfather of Jehu, King of Israel, 825 BC). "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, [from Zereda in Manasseh], who made Israel to sin." (2 Kings 14: 24) This Jeroboam II was devoted to worldly affairs and admitting pagan worship under iniquitous priests, and to fighting his neighbors to restore to the Israelites towns which had been in other times conquered by the Arameans. He extended his boundaries to include many Aramean cities. The result was that the Israelites were not the only recipient in sin, but that the conquered pagans also exerted upon them an impact of moral decay which the priesthood willingly accepted. Hosea could not look upon this situation without realizing that, if God was the guide and director of His people, He could not, as he thought, permit this to continue indefinitely, and felt that God would chastise Israel for its shameful way of life.

Hosea thus foresees not only the termination of the Israelite ruling house, but also the entire nation. And he declares, as coming from God: "I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel." (Hosea 1: 4) And in Chapter 4, Hosea brings a general charge against the people:

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land; because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." (Hosea 4; 1). And after naming one by one, the evils of lying and killing, stealing and adulterous behavior, and others, he declares that the land shall mourn. The priests, those who should lead the way, are pointed out with wrath:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shall be no priest to me. . . . They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. . . . And there shall be, like people, like priest: And I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their days." (Hosea 4: 6, 8, 9)

Hosea then goes on, in the name of God, to lash out at the idolatries to be found in the Northern Kingdom: "They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms. . . . therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery". (Hosea 4: 13)

Here Hosea meant that since God and the Hebrew people were as wedded husband and wife, their worship of pagan gods and baalim was as adultery in the marriage relationship, and that therefore the children would be unable to appreciate the trust and loyalty of the marriage vow and would destroy their self-respect in deplorable relationships.

"Therefore," saith the Lord, "Hear ye this, o priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, o house of the king; for judgment is toward you. . ." (Hosea 5: 1) And he goes on to state that the iniquity of Israel is such that the souls of the people have become separated from

the All-Soul of the Father and in such a condition that they could not think of seeking God; if they did, they would not find Him. Their doings created a crust upon their souls so that they could not see righteousness shining forth from the Father, as though a dark cloud hid the radiance of the sun from the eyes of the onlooker. Only by removal of the dark cloud—the evil and the sins— by the people themselves could the face of God be revealed anew unto them. I shall continue with the prophecies of Hosea in my next sermon.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 28

Received August 20, 1959.

JESUS STUDIED HOSEA'S PROPHECIES.

I am here, Jesus.

In my last sermon I showed how Hosea, the great Prophet of Israel, saw punishment approaching as a result of the iniquities and moral degradation to which the Northern Kingdom had descended. But I have also said that Hosea was not right in thinking that it was the Father who was bringing the punishment for sin, for the Father does not punish.

However, the evils which the Israelites of this time practiced, with their increasing loss of moral fiber and deterioration into immorality and pagan worship, inevitably created material conditions which worked against them. The people lost their high faith in God and what He represented for them: righteousness and justice. They lost, in a word, their lofty idealism which had given them the steel and the sinews to take Caanan as the land which He had promised them. They lost their faith that He would protect them—and thus lost their link with Him. Only by a return to Him could the link be reestablished.

The Father's spiritual forces were unable to help and protect Israel because the spiritual contact had been broken by the people's withdrawal into materialism and evil practices. The two Hebrew kingdoms—and specifically Israel at the time— were thus left uncovered to the storms of materialism and the dominant materialistic forces then in operation. For just as I said when I preached in Palestine, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," man is subject to the powers that be in the kingdom to which he belongs, and if man is subject to the kingdom of the earth plane, there he has only the forces of that plane to cling to and must abide by what those forces do.

Now in the earth plane conditions of those times, Israel, a drop of water as against a mighty sea, was tossed about by the larger and more powerful of the Fertile Crescent nations,

and had nothing to adhere to for protection. She sought alliances in other countries, but if I may use the word "soul" with a collective connotation, what reliance could she have on nations in a similar or worse condition of soul? Only if the soul returns to the Father and seeks Him can it receive His Protection. Only as Israel turned from her evil ways and returned to God by obeying His Statutes of justice and righteousness, could Israel rise above the earth plane, reestablish the spiritual link with Him and obtain His Protection.

Now Hosea had great spiritual insight and it was given unto him to realize that the only way for Israel to survive was to come back to the Lord. In his book, he wrote in a way that the people could understand, and he attributed conditions, good and evil, to the workings of God. But instead of saying, "Work evil and evil will work within you," he could only say, "Work evil and God will punish you." But he had the insight to realize that once the people suffered a disaster, they would understand that this disaster was caused by their own sins and, rejecting their sins and iniquities, would turn to God and seek His Help: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help. I will be thy King: where is any other that may save thee?"(Hosea 13: 9 – 10)

If there was no way for the people to have faith in God and obey His Statutes of righteousness (in their way of living), then their own evils would create the evil forces that would overtake them. Or, as Hosea thought, God would use other nations as His instrument of punishment.

Thus, in his love for his people, Israel, he exhorted them to forsake their evils and return to God before it was too late—and before the punishment, which he saw coming, could strike its terrifying blows. Only repentance for evil done and a return with contrite heart could have any appeal to God. A superficial, outward turning to God without the change in heart was meaningless. "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find Him; He hath withdrawn himself from them." (Hosea 5: 6)

And in this connection the ritual of sacrifice is worthless: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6: 6)

The main theme in Hosea, then, is repentance for sin and a revival of faith in God and to walk in His Statutes. Punishment is not merely for the sake of punishment, but to enable Israel to reform and correct its way to attain the moral and ethical standards set by God. In the words of Hosea, God says: "I will go and return to My Place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek My Face: in their affliction they will seek Me early." (Hosea 5: 15)

Hosea then prophesizes the return to God after the coming disaster, and the resultant revival and life for the nation: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His Sight." (Hosea 6: 1 – 2) This, then, was the promise of redemption given by God to the Israelites through the mouth of Hosea. It had nothing to do with me, Jesus, as some Christians think. They profess to see in these words a prophesy of my resurrection, on the third day. Nothing can be further from the truth. Hosea had no inkling of my coming, as he has told me, and his words were directed only to the Hebrew people without the slightest idea his words might be misconstrued to be applied to another situation more than seven centuries later.

But Hosea did have an insight into the redemption of his people. This redemption was twofold: It meant a return to Palestine from exile in Assyria, but it also meant redemption from sin and a return to the Lord. Since, in his day, God was presumed to be living in the Temple in Jerusalem, a return to the Lord meant a material return to the land as well as a moral reform. I am sorry to say that some writers on this subject think this return meant a physical return only—it did not, and, as a matter of fact, when in later centuries the Father was more correctly conceived as being universal and present everywhere in the world, a return to Him meant a return to His Statutes and moral Laws. The strong emphasis laid by Hebrew writers on the physical return or ingathering of the exiles was made inevitable by the two exiles suffered by the Hebrew people during this millennium of which I speak. Later I realized that return to the land where God dwells was a concept which in its wider meaning really represented a return to the pristine purity of the soul and life in the Spiritual Heavens. When I was preaching in Palestine, I had the knowledge that ultimately this return to God and the land meant return to the spirit world, but with a home in the Celestial Heavens where the Divine Love in the soul gives it its abode with the Father Himself.

Now when Hosea spoke of a return to God, he meant primarily a moral regeneration, a rebirth following the punishment of exile to Assyria, which he realized was rapidly approaching. This exile, he thought, would last "until the end of days" but the return would finally be a renewal of their inheritance under David, their king. ". . . afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord, their God, and David their King; and shall come trembling unto the Lord and His Goodness in the latter days." (Hosea 3: 5)

Here, then, Hosea had a clear Messianic concept—ultimate happiness for the Hebrew people under a king come from the House of David. It would be a Kingdom achieved through repentance unto contentment, with God their protector, and ruled by a descendant of their great king, David.

Here is one of the first Hebrew concepts of the Messiah—not the Messiah as conceived by Christians some eight hundred to a thousand years later, but the Messiah as conceived by one of the greatest of Hebrew prophets early in the story of sacred prophesy. For Hosea says: "And the children of Judah and of Israel shall be gathered together and they shall appoint themselves a head, and shall go up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel." (Hosea 1: 11)

This meant that after the exile of the Hebrews, both Israelites and Judeans would return to the land united as one country and, having chosen their king, leave the land of exile to return to their own land. They would at the same time be regenerated in spirit obedient to God's Statutes, for the day of Jezreel meant the day of redemption. Their one head, then, was the king of their redeemed nation—their Messiah. This is one of the prophecies regarding my coming found in the books of the prophets, a subject I shall deal with as I show the development of love in the Old Testament.

Once Israel forsakes her evil ways and returns to God, then God will shower upon the land and the people great abundance of life and fertility. Hosea meant to tell his people that this abundance and life were not only for this world of the material but for the life of the soul—and the only way he could give his people this feeling was to write it in a way they could understand. Since they could not understand language dealing with life in the spirit world, he wrote about the good things they longed for in this world, but in such wonderful poetry and beauty that some of the people sensed that, because of its sublimity, these things went beyond their fondest hopes and

could be secured only in an ideal world. This world to them was the Messiah's time of redemption.

At this time Israel's sins were to be forgotten, for the purified soul cannot hold a memory of sin, they were to turn from idolatry to faith in the Father, calling Him, as the true church, Ishi, my Husband. And the Father was to return to His people in Love—the Divine Love which the Father has for His children. "I will heal their backsliding I will love them freely." (Hosea 14: 4)

And, states Hosea, this Divine Love will be as between husband and wife: "And I will betroth thee unto Me forever. Yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in justice and in loving-kindness, and in compassion [the Divine Love]. And I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord." (Hosea 2: 19 – 20)

It was from the study of Hosea that I realized that God's Love was different from human love and that It could be possessed by man.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heaven.

SERMON 29

Received August 21, 1959.

AMOS, FIRST PROPHET OF ISRAEL.

I am here, Jesus.

Amos is the first of the real prophets of Israel who exercised his ministry during the reign of Jeroboam II. I have already told you that this king was idolatrous and materialistic in his attitude, devoting his rule to enlarging his domain and making it as powerful as he could. No one could have dared predict the destruction of this kingdom within fifty years of the prophet's warning. Yet Amos did so, and he was correct. He did not base his prophecies on visions, but on knowledge of the workings of the spiritual forces which work upon man's soul. If a man is evil in his heart, he attracts evil souls from the spirit world, and these help create conditions that will bring the sinful man to disaster. Sometimes material conditions are favorable to the extent that the pressure of the evil forces cannot undermine sufficiently the favorable position of the person in question, and people have thus speculated on the apparent prosperity of evil individuals. And conversely, people there are who, while really striving to live up to moral and ethical standards, cannot seem to prosper or experience material difficulties, causing misgivings as to the power of God to protect His children from evil. You will see that from this eventually evolved the story of Job, which I shall discuss at a later time. But here let me say that adverse material conditions, such as produced by the machinations of evil, selfish associates, or local or

national events, may present obstacles to advancement or provoke losses, and man is subject to the material laws that prevail at the time.

The statement, "Thou shalt be subject to the powers that be," is true, yet so is the one in II Chronicles 25: 8 that "God hath power to help." Though material, or earth plane, conditions are not subject to spiritual laws, but to material laws, yet God, through His ministering angels, or spirits, seek to protect those who seek Him, and work to overcome unfavorable material conditions for them. Sometimes the effort consumes what to mortal beings is considerable time, measured sometimes even in years, but that is simply a point of view, and it is well to remember that spirit efforts continue ceaselessly and that the time does come when the protecting forces are able to reach through the earth conditions, or when these change bring about an amelioration of the man's material situations. During this time, the man with faith in God, and who prays to God, may keep contact with the spirit forces who give him courage and strength in his time of adversity and enable him to bear up by giving him an insight into the true proportions of his difficulties, and he sees them, therefore, as they really are: very temporary when compared to his complete life, both mortal and spirit. Furthermore, God, I must tell you, gave man a free will to act, and by that very gift took away from Himself absolute power to force man to act as he wishes. Therefore He cannot, or does not, force man to act contrary to man's wishes, even though they be for unmitigated evil, and there are also national and universal laws which He created and which He therefore cannot nullify to protect man or life. What He can do, however, is to bring into operation higher laws which if obeyed may neutralize those in effect.

For example, God made available to mankind through me, His highest spiritual Law yet known to mankind, His Divine Love, at a time when the Hebrew people were being torn and afflicted by that cruelest and most brutal of the oppressor nations, Rome. Only the Divine Love and Its possession in abundance could have given Israel the fortitude, courage and faith to endure and overcome the great storm of evil that vented its wrath upon the nation, and enabled it to perceive this yoke as it really was— a storm of great violence, but withal a passing one in the ocean of eternal time, and one from which Israel was to take refuge, and not to face. Human love was not equal to the immense task of coping with the greater human evil that was ancient Rome, and thus Israel adopted the disastrous course of rebellion and destruction. As the Messiah of God, I could have averted this disaster to my people if they had believed my words and prayed to the Father for His Love.

Now, just as many in Judah had, in the day after my coming, sunk down to the level of the heathen to act as he did with force, and to be punished by the sword, so had leaders in the land of Israel sunk down to the lowness of the heathen in turning away from the moral and ethical Statutes of the Father for the nation's life, and acted as did the neighboring peoples and followed their idolatry, their immorality and the degradation of their behavior. Thus Amos prophesied against the surrounding people, the Syrians, the Philistines in Gaza, Ashdod and Ashkelon, the Edomites to the south of Judah, the Ammonites and the Moabites. He did this to show that God is the God of all peoples, pagan as well as Hebrew, and that the consequences of their evils would be their destruction. And then, as Prophet of Israel, he warned the Israelites of their sins and iniquities and prophesied destruction not only because of their evil ways but because they had despised the Law of God, with whom their fathers had made an everlasting covenant. These evils included idolatry, bribery, betrayal of justice, oppression of the poor, immoral sex practices, profanation of the altar, seducing with wine the Nazarites, who were

pledged to refrain from intoxicating drinks, and also oppression of the prophets who warned the people against their evildoings. Yes, Amos raised his voice against the kine of Bashan, the women, who oppressed the poor, crushed the needy and incited their men to indulgences, and he protested against the pagan-type practices at Beth-el, Gilgal and other altars.

He also reminded the people of the punishment God had been meting out without their returning to Him— famine, lack of food, drought, lack of drinking water, plagues and pestilence, warfare and death; these had been visible warnings to return to God and His Statutes, but these had not touched the hard hearts of Israel— and therefore destruction of the land was at hand. Amos pleads with the people to seek the Lord, that a merciful Lord might save a remnant: “For thus saith the Lord God unto the House of Israel, Seek ye Me, and ye shall live: . . . Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, seek Him. . . . The Lord is His Name.” (Amos 5: 4, 7 – 8) “Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.” (Amos 5: 14 – 15)

By this Amos meant that while evil conditions, because of the evils committed, were now so advanced that the disasters to come could no longer be avoided, yet a return to God and His righteousness might halt the full flood of disaster by the reappearance of some favorable forces and thus might avert their complete extermination and enable a remnant of the people to be rescued.

Amos then tells the people that no amount of religious feasting or ceremonies can take away sin. What God wants is righteousness and justice, and not sacrifices:

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. (Amos 5: 21 – 24)

Amos tells us he pleaded through prayer to God to prevent the coming flood of disaster, and he tells us how he was able to understand the words and the warnings which were delivered to him by God's messengers: and these were in the form of poetic images or pictures which everyone could interpret. These pictures were the way in which Amos' brain interpreted the messages he received. They could only be delivered through him in a way familiar to him or to his experiences in life. Thus the war of starvation is one in which grasshoppers devour the grass of the land (Amos 7: 1 – 2)), and the warnings of devastation by fire are that of fire devouring part of the sea, (Amos 5: 4), and the warning of the crumbling of walls and destruction is carried out by means of the plumb line, a symbol of judgment executed according to the righteousness of cause. At the end of these warnings Amos was told that God could no longer withhold judgment, and it meant that the evil conditions could no longer be contained and like a devastating flood must burst the retaining wall and overwhelm all in its path.

In connection with these prophecies of doom, Amos had to show his courage. The official priest of Beth-el, Amaziah, informed the King, Jeroboam, that Amos was conspiring against him,

raising mistrust in the minds of the people by proclaiming he would die by the sword and Israel led away captive.

The high priest, by his own authority and the King's approval, ordered Amos to leave and go back to Tekoa whence he came, Beth-el being no welcome place for him and his prophecies. Fearlessly Amos replied he was not a professional prophet— meaning that he would not foretell only those things the king wanted to hear, but that in reality he was a messenger of God, for he was declaring those things which God, through His angels, had ordered him to say. He told the authorities that, indeed, he had been content in his humble work as sheep-master and tree caretaker, but that the Lord had taken him away from tending to the flock and the trees, and had told him, “Go prophesy unto my people Israel.” That prophesy was a dreadful one. Amos also predicted the doom of the priest's family as well as death in the house of the king. Amos thus showed that courage which true prophets— bearers of tidings of destruction and warnings of disaster— had to display in Israel in order to face the angry rulers and priests and as God's messengers to calmly repeat the prophesy and repose confidence in the Lord, even if the unpopular prophesy meant physical death to the bearer. Jeroboam did not move against Amos and the ruler did not die a violent death, but later, the next king, Uzziah, did seek to destroy the prophet, and both he and Amaziah had Amos beaten to death by blows on the head with iron bars.

In conclusion, Amos had a persistent feeling that regardless of Israel's shortcomings, the total destruction of the nation would not take place, despite the certainty he felt of the nation's punishment:

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God. (Amos 9: 11, 15)

And so, in an appendix, in chapter 9, which some have felt to be of another hand, he experienced the great expectation that a day of redemption would follow when sin would be eliminated from the sinners and they would live in the warmth of the Father's Love.

The very prescience he foretold of coming disaster for Israel gave him the insight that, as the only people who had accepted the Father and had some understanding of His Ways, the entire nation would not be permitted to perish, just as they had not been permitted to die in Egypt, and that there must be some among them who, while silent in the time of corruption, retained a love of justice and mercy, and would keep alive the light of God's Torah.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 30

Received October 22, 1959.

AMOS AND HOSEA WERE OBEDIENT TO GOD.

I am here, Jesus.

I now want to review briefly and to summarize the place of Amos in the Old Testament development of the human love, the forerunner of the Divine Love which in the course of time I was designated by the Father to possess in my soul and to therefore proclaim Its actuality and presence to all mankind. Had there been no men like Moses, whom I shall speak about separately, or the Prophets, men's minds and hearts would not have been, as they were, channeled into the ways preordained as the only ways to a perfect soul and an intense awareness of the reality of that Father Whose influence of Love and Mercy kept strengthening the bonds of the human soul to His Own Great All-Soul, so that in time acceptance of the Eternal Commandments of love to God and fellowman, by at least one nation, I speak of Judea, and by other people to a varied degree, made it possible for Him to send at His appointed time His Messiah, for the rebirth of the human heart and its partaking of the Divine Essence through prayer to Him.

The story of Hosea, as we have seen, was one of intuition of the Father's Love for mankind, and I showed how it controlled the life of the man to the point where he exemplified, as a true prophet, the Love which the Father has for His children. Hosea, of course, in his troubles with Gomer, showed in his human soul the full human love of which he was capable as a human being and could not, and did not, have possession of the Divine Love of which at the time the Father alone was the depository. But the fact of his human love, and the sufferings which that love entails, is the reason for bringing to you now the truth that the Prophets, in their inflexible and adamant stand for moral and ethical law, and in the apparent sternness which characterized their demand for absolute adherence to these laws, carried in their souls a great love for their fellow Jews, rebuking them for correction and speaking out fearlessly, regardless of personal convenience, safety or peril, to bring home to these Jews the return to the ways of God, so that God would be able to manifest His love for them, and protect them from their own follies and outside threats and dangers. Though they may not have said it in just these words, they proclaimed that if they would acknowledge the Father and walk in His Ways, He would guide them through the vicissitudes and travails of the material world and direct their paths into a material and spiritual homeland of safety and love.

Amos understood this in all its implications. The humble tree dresser and herdsman, in his life of rustic simplicity, held within his being, as an absolute imperative, obedience to God's Commandments as the one salvation of the soul and as protection from the hostile forces of nature and nation—for he saw in nature the workings of God and, in the activities of other people, the clay with which God molded His Work and brought about His Designs. And if he

realized that God's Laws were for the development of these good things which are embodied in His Love, he thought (but erroneously) that rejection of His Laws for the doing of evil would bring about God's wrath and anger, which would be similar to wrath and anger in the human heart. He did not understand that evil created its own evil conditions which would rise as a barrier against God's Protection and Love, so that God would be all the less able to help, as His messengers of love and mercy encountered greater difficulty in piercing the sinful conditions surrounding the evil soul.

Amos' determination to go to Beth-el and denounce the evil conditions existing in Israel were, therefore, motivated by a soul highly developed in human love, and not in anger, toward his fellowman. He understood that it was not for him to judge, but to relay the message of that Jehovah in Whom he had implicit faith and Who was to be Judge and Administrator, through other people, of the judgment He wished to execute upon them. If God did not love these people, who were His Own, He would not manifest the concern for their correction; they had to, as His chosen people, live up to the Commandments which he had given them through Moses, as a sign of His Love for them, just as, in that very Love, He had brought them forth from slavery in Egypt.

Here then was the story of God's Love for His people through the correction which their falling away from His Commandments necessitated; for had there been no correction, the people would have unquestionably fallen into complete paganism, vying with the pagans in abominable acts of ritual slaughter of firstborn children, and reeking with the foul deeds and thoughts of corruption, such as the accusations and charges leveled by Amos against the Hebrews and the surrounding people bring into vivid focus, and the world, or much of it, given over to the brutality and beastliness of the animal in human guise, soulless and devoid of its link with its Creator, and devoid of its fullness of love and kindness and mercy to others.

Amos spoke in terms of the entire nation of Israel, for at the time of his life and even in later times, the individual was in some ways as a grain of sand on the sea-shore, but he also spoke of various kinds of trespasses, and the effects of the punishment against Israel, as all Amos' hearers could understand, that would be felt by the nation as individuals. The very fact that Amos, as one man, could go up to Beth-el, face a hostile assemblage of corrupt worshippers and thunder forth his message of denunciation and doom in the name of Jehovah, gave the individual, as a human soul, greater recognition in the religious circles of Israel. His fearlessness, his resolution, his courage to face physical violence for his principles, led the way to other prophets, to Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and to eventual acknowledgment that the nation rested on the faith of the individual soul, that it was this soul that prospered the nation or led to its doom, and that it was this soul which was responsible for its own deeds and acts, and salvation or separation from God.

Amos stood in his day for justice—for justice for the people and freedom from oppression from corrupt and selfish leaders. These have always led to the downfall of people, because the message of religion, of the brotherhood of man, has been cast aside when material prosperity beckons. It is for this reason that, weak in the face of materialism, the human soul stands in need of the Power of the Divine Love to overcome the world and the flesh and to bring man into at-onement with the Father. Amos declared that deeds of justice and love were the essentials of faith in God, and the only true foundation of any social order; his words stand as a

monument to God as the Source of our humanity as living people and as living beings, upon whom, in the abundance of His tender Care, God would pour out His Divine Love and give them eternal life with Him.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 31

Received: April 21, 1960.

THE FIRST ISAIAH, PROPHET OF ISRAEL.

I am here, Jesus.

Isaiah, son of Amos, is known as the prophet of faith in God par excellence, in which this faith is applied to the nation of Judah as a whole, and served to show that God cannot be left out of national politics. In Amos, and in Hosea, we saw that these prophets of Israel warned of threatened disaster to the nation because of moral laxity and sin, but Isaiah went further, and while he, too, continued the warnings for Israel, and also Judah, because of sin and injustices that swept over the land, yet his warnings were also of a political nature and dealt with politics and foreign affairs on the highest international level.

Isaiah is the first great counselor of peace for his country. He began to prophesy during the year of King Uzziah's death about the year 738 BC. For some years before, Uzziah had been suffering with leprosy and his son Jotham had been in charge of the government. Uzziah worshipped Jehovah in the Temple at Jerusalem because of political affairs, but he permitted the pagan rites to be performed in the high places.

He had conquered Philistia and rebuilt the port of Elath on the Red Sea and broke down the walls of Gath, Jabneh and Ashdod, and northern Philistine towns along the border of Judah. He also constructed fortifications in Jerusalem, repaired trenches, and built watchtowers as a warning system against enemy invasions. He fought wars with the Arabians and Meunims and defeated them, reorganized the army and did much to further agriculture and improve the water supply. A good report of him was given in the Scriptures in II Chronicles 26: 4 – 7, despite his recognition of pagan worship.

What made Isaiah prophesy against Judah was a twofold indictment. The prosperity of the country, with victory and larger territory, brought with it conditions similar to Israel, with inordinate taste for luxury, the introduction of foreign customs, manners and ideas, false pride, avarice and the resultant trampling upon the poor. The second factor was the ascension to the

Assyrian throne of Tiglath-Pileser in 746 BC and the conquests made by this monarch—Damascus, Tyre and other states submitting to his power. Judah would need all of God's Help to prevent it from falling prey to Assyria, as did these countries, and as Israel did in 721 BC

Now Uzziah's son, Jotham, did not last very long on the throne of Judah after his father's death. He continued the policy then in effect of permitting pagan worship in the Judean countryside but preached Judaism in Jerusalem. He defeated the Ammonites, built cities in the hill territory of Judah and fortresses and watchtowers in the forests, erected in the capital the high gate of the Temple and began work on the walls on the hill of Ophel. He died at the age of 41, just at the time the forces of Israel and Syrians marched against Judah because of Judah's refusal to join against Assyria. Ahaz, his son, who came to the throne, was a timid person who lacked religious faith, and the appearance of the hostile soldiers made him and many of his subjects very fearful of their personal safety. Of this, I shall speak later.

Such was the state of affairs in Judah at the time Isaiah had been prophesying for some years. This prophet was a native of Jerusalem, a member of Uzziah's royal family, being a cousin on his father's side. It seems strange that this young man, who belonged to the nobility, did not partake of their aristocratic attitude of the time toward public life, but rather espoused the cause of the common tradesmen and workers in Jerusalem who wanted to remain at peace with the other nations of the area. But when I pointed out that the prophets had been staunch in their stand for peace, as against violence and warfare, then one may better understand his position against Judah's alliance with other countries to fight Assyria, as well as his attitude of faith in God as the real and only genuine means of protecting his country. Here he clashed with the king, and with the militant nobility.

Isaiah, as a young man in his early twenties, began his ministry as a prophet at the death of King Uzziah, and his picturesque vision of his call by God is given in the 6th Chapter of his Book in the Scriptures

Many of his early prophecies are in the vein of Amos and Hosea, both of whom he studied and relied upon for prophetic messages. He bewailed the sins of Judah, and the terror to befall the country on the Day of Jehovah, the day when the wicked leaders would be consumed. These messages, of course, insist upon reform to meet Jehovah's standards of ethics and justice. But in the parable of the unprofitable vineyard, Isaiah showed his insight into God's relationship to the nation; like Moses, he emphasized the Father's Love for His children, then laid bare their disloyalty to Him. He pictured God as the Planter and Judah as the vineyard:

Let me sing of my beloved
A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.
Well, my well-beloved had a vineyard
In a very fruitful hill;
And He plowed it carefully
And gathered out the stones thereof,
And planted it with the choicest vines,
And built a tower in the midst of it,
And also hewed out a winepress therein;
Then He waited when it would produce grapes

But it brought forth wild grapes. (Isaiah 5: 12)

Isaiah thus spoke to the people of their ingratitude towards the Father by this sinful behavior. He then continues as though God is speaking through him, demanding judgment: "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes." (Isaiah 5: 4) "For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." (Isaiah 5: 7)

The important thing to remember, for my prophet here, is that Isaiah thus continued the conception of God's Divine Love for His people. He spoke, and wrote, in a parable that was clear and dear to all Hebrews—the love that the man of the soil has for his field. God loved the Hebrews because they were the ones to carry out His Commands for justice and righteousness, and God, the Husband of Israel, or God, the Planter of the vineyard, was God who loved with His Divine Love the people of His choice, and when necessary chastised them so that they would return to Him, through practice of those sacred commands for righteousness and justice which characterized Him for the Hebrews at this period. And yet, such is the faith of Isaiah in God, that, he declares, the time will come when not only Judah would return to Him, but all mankind as well. For Isaiah knew and proclaimed that Jehovah is not only God of the Hebrews, but the universal God of all mankind:

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His Ways, and we will walk in His Paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem."
(Isaiah, 2: 3)

Isaiah was positive that the Father's Word must come from Jerusalem. I believed this, and it was one of the reasons why I went to Jerusalem to bring my message of the Father's Love to the city of David. The Word of the Lord had to come from Jerusalem. Thus many of my messages of Divine Love, though not recorded, were given in the Temple. Isaiah also spoke his messages of universal peace, an ideal for the future, which constitutes one of the great passages in the Bible:

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn of war anymore. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the Light of the Lord."
(Isaiah 2: 4 – 5)

As Isaiah thus denounced war, and spoke against rebellion as the way to salvation, the same did I when I appeared on earth. As Isaiah predicted peace through knowledge of God, I taught peace between the Zealots and Roman overlords in Palestine, peace to prevent the nation from destruction, and peace among all mankind through brotherly love, with the Father's Love possessing each soul and bringing to each a compassionate understanding of that of his brothers, regardless of race or color, through adherence to my Way to eternal salvation through prayer for His Divine Love.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 32

Received: July 12th. 1960

THE FIRST ISAIAH AND THE ASSYRIAN MENACE.

I am here Jesus.

In my last sermon I showed that Isaiah was a prophet of peace, a man who championed the cause of the people as against the ruling class in Jerusalem. Now I am going to write you about the prophecies which Isaiah made and is supposed to have made, and tell you what therein is true and what is false.

These predictions were made as a result of Judah's participation in the worldwide events that were taking place at this time. The two great nations of the area, Assyria and Egypt, were vying for dominant power, and the small states between them, Israel, Judah and Syria, were caught, so to speak, in the middle. You know, of course, that Isaiah preached neutrality and a policy of quiescence with faith in God as the guiding principle. His words in Hebrew are hard to carry over into English because of a play on words, but he said something like, "In the Lord abide, and He will provide." But owing to the fear generated by Assyria in the small states, their rulers, like Rezin of Syria and Rekah of Judea, thought it preferable to join with Egypt as the lesser of the two evils.

In fact these principalities were so vexed at Judea's passivity at this time (about 738 BC) that they determined to attack Jerusalem. As I mentioned in my first sermon on Isaiah, Ahaz, son of Jotham, was on the throne of Judea. The prophet was now rather removed from close sanguinity with the royal house, yet he had as an elder statesman continued to be heard at times in defense of his policy of faith and neutrality as against the young nobles surrounding Ahaz. When the ruler came to inspect the water supply system of Jerusalem to prepare for a siege, Isaiah met him with his small son, Shear-Jesheb (a remnant shall remain), and told him not to be

dismayed, for the two attackers were weak and should give the king no concern. Isaiah spoke from his knowledge of Syria and Israel as a statesman, but he also spoke from his insight and the inner convictions of the situation which God had given him as His prophet.

Isaiah's prophecy thus dealt with a local event, but the passage has become one of the most famous in the Old Testament:

Behold, the young woman is with child and will bear
a son and will call his name 'Immanuel' For before the
lad knows how to reject the bad and choose the good, the
land whose two kings are causing you terror will
be deserted. (Isaiah 7: 14 – 16)

These sentences were taken out of context and the Hebrew word “alma,” (a young woman) was given the meaning “virgin” by the Greek and Latin translators, so that the thought expressed was that of a virgin birth, so popular in ancient religions, And here I may cite the birth of Horus, among the Egyptians, or Buddha, in India. The early Christian editors, of course, were seeking something in the Old Testament to support their theories of a virgin birth for the Christ to bring back to, and convert, their pagan compatriots. They succeeded, to be sure, but impartial scholars and many members of different churches are now agreed that this prophecy of Isaiah did not refer to me but to a child born during Isaiah's time.

As a matter of fact, the prophecy refers to Hezekiah, the king's son. The fact that on the child's shoulders should rest the administration of the government is confirmation that the prophecy referred to the ruler to be. The latter started out well and made religious reforms in an effort to stamp out idol worship, destroying the old brazen serpent that had been venerated for centuries, and forbade grove and high place worship. In this respect he earned the respect and approval of those interested in preserving the Hebrew faith; and this is true. But he had no conception of social justice or the rights of the poor man or anything that might improve the condition of the people. Never could those words have applied to me, for I did not come to be the king or ruler of a material kingdom, but as the Messiah of God, the Way-shower to the Father and salvation through prayer to Him for His Divine Love. I shall discuss this in more detail in another sermon.

The prophecy of the young woman and her child was followed by the defeat of Israel and Syria, as Isaiah had predicted, yet brought about through Ahaz' secret plea to Assyria for help. Of course this help cost Judah vast sums in gold and silver taken from the Temple, and it also reduced the nation's strength and independence. Assyria's armies came marching into Palestine and, in 734 BC, invaded Israel, taking possession of my own country, Galilee, and lands east of the Jordan river. Syria, with its capital at Damascus, was crushed two years later. In 724 BC, the Assyrians came again to Israel because of rebellion there and took Samaria, the capital, after a three-year siege. The people, upwards of thirty thousand, were enslaved in different parts of the Assyrian land and the Ten Tribes of Israel were lost as a Hebrew entity.

Isaiah lived through these years, keenly aware of the great threat to Judea from the same armies, and he felt that the disaster which had overtaken Syria and Israel had been due to their refusal to obey the Laws of God as given in the Ten Commandments. He also felt that Judea was in just as poor an ethical state as the conquered nations had been. Furthermore, he was

heartbroken, since Ahaz' alliance with Assyria had entailed recognition of the Assyrian gods. Ahaz went so far as to order the erection in the Temple of a new altar dedicated to Tilgath-Pileser, the Assyrian king, and this pagan shrine displaced the old altar to Jehovah. Like Elijah before him in denouncing the Baal of the Phoenicians, so Isaiah now would not countenance such an abomination. To Isaiah, this situation could mean only one thing—that Jehovah would cause the destruction of Judea. Before the disaster that struck Israel, he prophesied that the Judeans would be overwhelmed by the Assyrians like flood waters:

Inasmuch as this people has rejected the waters of
Shiloah that run smoothly . . . ; therefore, behold, the Lord
will bring up upon them the waters of the river that
are mighty and many . . . , and it will rise over all its
channels, and run over all its banks; and it will sweep
on into Judah, an overflowing flood, and will reach
up to the neck. . . .(Isaiah 8: 6 – 8)

On different occasions Isaiah made known God's Will that Judah would eventually be destroyed and the people taken captive. When his second son was born about 732 BC, he called him "Lemaher shalal hash baz" (Swift is spoil, speedy is prey), and when Egypt and her petty alliances rose up against Sargon in the years 713-711 BC, including Philistia, Moab, Edom and Judah, Isaiah, then in his forties, went about the streets unclad as a vivid reminder of the way captives were treated by the Assyrians. The coalition was a failure and suffered defeat in battle. Though Judah was not directly attacked, yet the king had to pay considerable sums to buy off assault upon Jerusalem. Sargon, the Assyrian monarch, desisted partly because Judah had remained neutral in the past— so that Isaiah, through his policy of peace and nonintervention, had been instrumental in saving the holy city he knew must in time come to grief.

Still another great crisis faced Judah from Assyria in the years that followed. When Sargon died in 705 BC, the petty states subject to him determined upon rebellion. The new monarch, Sennacherib, squashed every attempt at liberation, first in the lands neighboring his own, and then, in 702 BC, turning his attention to the west, putting down Sidon, Ashod, Ammon, Moab and Edom, as well as other principalities, and defeating decisively the Egyptians in battle at Altaku. Assyria was now ready to assail the fortress of Jerusalem and, indeed, would have taken it, had not Hezekiah, now the Judean king, sent word that he was ready to surrender or negotiate terms. Sennacherib agreed, and Jerusalem was saved in exchange for vast sums of gold and silver taken from his treasury and that of the Temple.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 33

Received July 14, 1960.

THE FIRST ISAIAH DECLARES GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THE NATIONS.

I am here, Jesus.

Now the fact is that when Hezekiah continued the neutralist policy of Isaiah, Judah became strong and prosperous, the tradesmen of Jerusalem flourishing in the period of peace. But when approached by Egypt and other principalities of the Palestine region, Hezekiah listened, and his decision was made in favor of the princelings and patricians of Judah who sought the occasion to enlarge their holdings and estates in war. In connection with Isaiah's reproof is his prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction— not by Assyria, as would be logical to assume, but by Babylonia, a prophecy that was fulfilled partly in 597 BC, and completely so in 586 BC, a hundred and fifty years later. This is so astounding that there are many students of the Bible who think this prophecy was never written by Isaiah, but is an interpolation inserted into the book of the prophet.

When I asked Isaiah how could he have foreseen these events, he replied that he could detect growing weaknesses in the Assyrian empire. The strain of maintaining many discontented vassals by force was such that it could not endure indefinitely, and that, while he prophesied that Judah would not be destroyed by Assyria, it would be conquered by the kingdom which should wrest the empire away from them— and this was Babylonia. And when I asked why should Judah fall before this new power, he stated simply that the Hebrew kings, led by their warlike aristocrats, were unable to accept the messages of the prophets for peace and submission to superior powers, and that one day the device of paying ransom money would be of no avail, and the decision would be made to have Jerusalem know the meaning of enemy might in the Temple itself. In short, he declared his prophecy was based on the pattern of behavior of the Hebrew kings, and he read into the future the normal course of events stemming from the past.

Isaiah, therefore, preached in 701 BC that Jerusalem would be safe against Assyria's armies, declaring:

Look upon Zion, the city of our solemn gatherings;
These eyes shall see Jerusalem, a peaceful habitation,
A tent that shall not be removed;
The stakes thereof shall never be plucked up,
Neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.
(Isaiah 33: 20)

Sennacherib left, and Jerusalem was safe, in accordance with Hezekiah's tribute money, but at the same time a pestilence broke out among the Assyrian soldiers, which hastened the invader's departure, and this was magnified very much into a great catastrophe in the account given in the Bible in 2 Kings 19.

So great was Isaiah's insistence upon peace, which he felt sure was what God desired, as He did, that he declared there must come forth another king of Judah who would bring peace to the land, and at the same time rule the kingdom with the righteousness and mercy demanded by Jehovah. This new king would appear in accordance with the Davidic covenant, a shoot out of Jesse:

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and might,
The spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord;
But with righteousness shall he judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the weak of the land;
And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of his reins.
(Isaiah 11: 2, 4, 5)

Isaiah, as I shall show later, was thinking of Hezekiah, the newborn child of the King of Judah, but, in the light of the passing centuries, what Isaiah predicted was an ideal King of Judah, one who would be faithful to God's Covenant and His Commandments for righteous conduct, one who should put his trust in God and deal in all fairness with God's people placed under his rule. Isaiah did not know who this might eventually be in the course of time, but he has told me his prophecy was not intended for the person who should be the Messiah of God, for the reason that he was not concerned with a spiritual king who should govern men only in the moral, ethical and spiritual sense; and this concept of the Messiah did not come into existence until many centuries later. When I studied the Scriptures as a youth in Nazareth, I understood that this prophecy could indeed refer to a spiritual Messiah; for when I appeared in Palestine, the land was under the rule of Rome, and I agreed with Isaiah that the people must not rebel against its Roman overlords, but await in subjection and peace the passing of this ruler, as had the Babylonians, Persians and Greeks before them. So I understood that a King of Judah, "a shoot out of Jesse," must be interpreted in a spiritual sense as the Messiah to rule in the Celestial Heavens and to teach the people victory over the Romans through the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life through the Father's Love.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 34
Received July 14, 1960.

THE FIRST ISAIAH'S STRUGGLE AGAINST SOCIAL EVILS AND SACRIFICES.

I am here, Jesus.

Isaiah's main efforts towards lifting up his people were directed to a more acceptable attitude towards life, not only in the area of strict morality and in habit, but also in the realization that the God of Israel was a Holy God— a God of absolute righteousness who was God not only of the Hebrews but of the whole world and the universe, such as was known of it at the time.

Among the social evils Isaiah condemned was the provocative dress worn by the aristocratic women of Jerusalem. The prophet felt that it was wrong for certain women, because of their wealth, to strut through the streets of the city displaying their charms for the purpose of seductiveness and as a lure for men to sin:

Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
And walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes,
Walking and mincing as they go,
And making a tinkling with their feet:
Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab. . . .
Instead of sweet spices there shall be rottenness;
And instead of a girdle, rags;
And instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth;
Branding instead of beauty. (Isaiah 3: 16 – 17, 24)

Another evil practice, which rich Judeans were guilty of, was that of buying up real property, so that the poorer man had no chance to own a plot of land for himself. Since Judah was very small, acquisition of land for monopolistic purposes created a terrible hardship, especially for farmers who were driven to give up their holdings through rapacious maneuvers, including violent means, the bribing of unscrupulous judges, and foreclosures on loans. The result was that poor farmers were impoverished and forced to come to Jerusalem to live a marginal existence in any way available. Thus did Isaiah warn the rulers and people of this vicious practice:

Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field,
Till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell,
Alone in the midst of the land;
In mine ears, said the Lord of hosts;
Of a truth many houses shall be desolate,
Even great and fair, without inhabitant.
For ten acres of vineyard shalt yield one bath,
And the seed of a homer shall yield an ephah.
(Isaiah 5: 8 – 10)

In addition, strong drink, even in Isaiah's day, was a contributing factor in the demoralization of the people. Hosea had already pointed out that “harlotry, wine and the new

wine take away the heart.” (Hosea 4: 11) Thus had the Nazirite and Rechabite cults been formed prohibiting wine and drink. But Isaiah, with his keen sense of perceiving the destructive practices in the land, brought under fire the habit among the wealthier class to become intoxicated and to shun work, in indulgence and carousing, especially the Lord's Work. Condemned in Isaiah's tirade are the fake prophets and the priests, who actually reeled along the streets intoxicated, and defiled not only the dinner table, but also the table of the shewbread in the Temple and the altars, supposedly sacred unto them:

Even these also reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink;
Both priest and prophet reel with strong drink,
They are swallowed up by wine, they stagger with strong drink,
They err in vision, they stumble in judgment.
For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness,
So that there is no place clean.
(Isaiah 28: 7 – 8)

Isaiah was very much like Amos and Hosea in his disapproval of the type of ritual connected with the worship of the Lord. Speaking for God, Hosea had declared, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6: 6) And Amos, you may remember, said:

I hate, I despise your feasts,
And I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Yea, though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meat offerings,
I will not accept them;
Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. . . .
But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.
(Amos 5: 21 – 22, 24)

This refusal of sacrifice by God, as the spiritual knowledge of Amos truly makes clear, was not merely refusal because of deterioration of the ritual, but of ritual itself. For God delivered the Hebrews out of the wilderness perils for forty years after the exodus from Egypt without ritual. For God said, through Amos, "Did ye bring unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O House of Israel?" (Amos 5: 25)

And Isaiah, as he was told spiritually, knew that Amos was right, and he wrote against sacrifices in very much the same manner. Ritual slaughter was futile and meaningless, but when injustice and bloodshed are added, God averts His face, so to speak, or is repelled. The people, prophets, priests and rulers all had to be taught that ritual was no substitute for righteousness:

What do I care for the multitude of your sacrifices? saith the Lord.
I have had My fill of the burnt offerings of rams,
And the fat of fed beasts;
And I take no delight in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.

When ye come to appear before Me, *who hath required this at your hand, to tread My Courts?*

Bring Me no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me;

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you;

Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear;

Your hands are full of blood.

(Isaiah 1: 11 – 13, 15)

I have purposely italicized the line "*. . .who hath required this at your hand, to tread My Courts?*" to emphasize that God, speaking through the prophet, had never told the priests to sacrifice animals, or any living creature, either as an offering for sin or as a firstling for appeasement or redemption (where the first of the crops, or living beings, belong to God), or for adoration or any other purpose. In addition, if worshippers came to prayer, but with evil in their hearts, He would reject their prayers, for such prayers could come only from the mind and offered for ostentation and public approbation, and could never come from the heart in sincerity, remorse and love. The passage does not mean that sacrifice was acceptable unto the Lord if the worshipper came with a pure heart. Sacrifice has never been approved by Him, and can never be used instead of heartfelt and sincere prayer to Him.

And thus, like Amos, Isaiah ended his sermon in the same way: a tremendous appeal by God, through His prophet, to live the true religion that God revealed to the Hebrews earlier with Moses—the religion of doing what is right in the sight of God:

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean.

Put away the evil of your doings from before My Eyes;

Cease to do evil, learn to do good.

Seek justice, relieve the oppressed;

Be fair to the fatherless, plead for the widow.

(Isaiah 1: 16 - 17)

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 35

Received July 14, 1960.

THE FIRST ISAIAH'S HOPE OF AN IDEAL KINGDOM FOR ISRAEL.

I am here, Jesus.

And one shall see that later the prophet Micah spoke in the same vein. I wish to conclude these sermons on Isaiah, at least for now, with the final period of Isaiah's life, which was beset by the turmoil of political affairs. I have referred to the Assyrian threat of 701 BC in my other sermons on Isaiah, but with different viewpoints in mind. I have shown, then, that Hezekiah had continued to adhere to the prophet's insistence upon neutrality in the power struggle between Egypt and Assyria, but in 701 BC the pro-Egyptian group, favoring rebelling against Assyria, gained the King's favor. Isaiah pleaded in vain for a continuation of his peace policy, but now Hezekiah made a secret alliance with Egypt, purchased quantities of military equipment from her, and became the target of attack from Assyria. In a short time all of Judah was overrun and Jerusalem alone was left to face the might of Assyria. Hezekiah was able to avert disaster once more by paying 300 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold.

At this time Hezekiah fell very ill, due to an aggravated form of carbuncle that was poisoning his blood. His physicians could do little to relieve him. Isaiah told him he was going to die. Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall of his chamber, praying and weeping at all his sins and schemings, repentant in his heart for the base things he had contrived, and seeking by direct prayer to God for recovery. And he prayed thus: "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a noble heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight." (Isaiah 38: 2 – 3)

And the truth is, as I have said, that the King had undertaken a reform of the religious rituals to eliminate the fertility symbols and other abominations. And thus may I point out and emphasize one of the real tangible instances of God's quick help in direct answer to prayer, for God heard and took pity on his sincere repentance, and through His messengers told Isaiah how to treat the infection. Then came the word of the Lord saying:

"Go, and say to Hezekiah; thus saith the Lord, The God of David thy father; I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears; Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years." (Isaiah 38: 5)

This is a misquote, for actually Hezekiah lived five years more, from 701 to 696 BC And this cure took a form, I should like to stress, of spiritual healing, for Isaiah, who was on a high spiritual plane, was able to catch the words of God's helping messenger: "Isaiah said, Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover." (Isaiah 38: 21)

And he did. The reason, though unknown to the physician or to Isaiah either, was that the figs in the palace, lying about without refrigeration produced molds which contained the curative substances, somewhat like the penicillin of your day. Hezekiah's death in 696 BC at the age of 42, due to excesses, unsuitable foods, and lastly illness which his constitution could not master, caused the worst internal and domestic troubles that ever plagued Judah through accession to the throne of that Manasseh whose name is spoken by Jews only with shuddering and heaviness of heart. One of the evils he resuscitated was the ritual murder of infants, including his own son, and innocent blood flowed in the streets of Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah. Isaiah could not live in that atmosphere of barbarianism, cruelty and obscurantism, and by the same token the adherents of his savage policies would not, and could not, tolerate the prophet's accusing finger against them. Therefore, with Manasseh's approval, they seized Isaiah and, as the old Hebrew

tradition states, slipped him in a hollow log and sawed it in two. Thus ended the prophetic career of the great successor to Amos and Hosea.

Many passages from Isaiah have been quoted constantly to demonstrate his command of language to describe God as powerful, holy, filled with glory and majesty and the Ruler of the Universe, but I wish to remind you that in New Testament times Isaiah was quoted as bringing to his people a foreknowledge of events up to my own days. Thus my disciples turned to Isaiah 9: 2 : “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

This light, to my disciples, alludes to me, or was in me, bringing with this light the conquest of death through belief in my person, in that I came with a soul filled with God's Divine Love, and who taught prayer for possession of this Love for eternal life.

Of course, Isaiah's words, as Isaiah himself would tell you, had no reference to me, but were introductory to the stanzas rejoicing at the birth of Hezekiah. This rejoicing at the birth of the "Heir Apparent" took the form of beautiful poetry in Isaiah, lyrical and exaggerated, to conform to the great significance of the event for the well- being of this Oriental nation, prone always to hyperbole and exuberance. This Isaiah meant by the lines above that Hezekiah's birth heralds light and prosperity, as well as a closer relationship to God, for the people who had suffered under Ahaz. Isaiah then goes on to exult: “For a child is born unto us; a son is given unto us; and the government is upon his shoulders; and his name is called Pele-Joez-EI-Gibbor-Abi-Ad-Sar-Shalom. (Isaiah 9: 6)

The Hebrew means, "God, the Mighty, is wonderful in counsel, God, the Everlasting Father, the Ruler of Peace." This did not mean that Hezekiah was to be considered God the Mighty, or raised to the level of the Deity, as the translation of some Bible versions erroneously imply, with the purpose of making the poem of rejoicing refer not to Hezekiah's birth, but to me, who would be called "God the Mighty" and the rest of this tremendous name. However, if you recall the names of Isaiah's two sons, "A remnant shall abide," and "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens," you will realize that, while such names may sound fantastic to you, they were not so fantastic to the Hebrews of those days, especially to Isaiah, who fathered all three, although they were unquestionably "blown up" to please a royal house of which Isaiah himself, you may recall, was an older member. Actually Isaiah tells me he meant by this name that God, the ever lasting and wonderful God of the Hebrews, had been gracious to the Hebrew people for giving them such a fine lad as Hezekiah, who turned out to be an excellent king.

Thus Isaiah went on to relate:

That the government may be increased, and of peace there be no end.
Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom
To establish it, and uphold it,
Through justice and through righteousness,
From henceforth even for ever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts doth perform this.
(Isaiah 9: 7)

In short, Isaiah was giving vent to a fond hope that, through Hezekiah, the throne of King David would be lifted to an ideal state of righteousness, which would continue forever. The

Jews, wherever they are on earth, are still waiting for an ideal state, if not under a kingdom of the House of David, then under a democratic form of government, dispensing justice and conducting itself with righteousness as an example to the nations. It is still imbued with the ideals of the prophets and the law of human love, righteousness and mercy, and will give all its attention to such a course wherever compatible with the earth plane functions and ideology of embattled nations, on earth, but the light of God's Love will eventually permeate into the land of the prophets, my land, and will possess the hearts of men, in Erez Ysrael, as elsewhere on earth. Amen.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 36

Received August 24th, 1960.

MICAH AND JERUSALEM'S ARISTOCRATS.

I am here, Jesus.

Along with the first Isaiah and contemporary with him is another prophet, Micah, who was born in the small town of Moreshah, situated in the southwest corner of Palestine near Gath. This name, let us remember, is connected with Goliath of Gath, in the days of King David, and shows that the Philistines had been active there, for they had lived in the coastal lowlands, while the Jews had maintained themselves in the foothills somewhat as pioneers or border settlers. It was also near the Egyptian frontier, which extended like an outstretched wing from Sinai into the land of Israel. It was a land that had known war, invasion and disaster.

Micah came of a family of farmers, sturdy and patriotic, ready to defend their rural homeland at any sign of trouble with the Philistines. Micah turned to the town and became interested in farm implements. His religious fervor became aroused at contact with the impure and idolatrous practices which he saw in evidence there. His knowledge of the sermons of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, the great prophet, who was active in Jerusalem, aroused in him a desire to emulate them, and bring to the attention of his neighbors the terrible consequences which they were building up for themselves with their unholy and pagan practices.

Micah began to prophecy about 722 BC, or shortly before the destruction of Israel and the exile of the Ten Tribes. And with this in mind, he turned to Samaria as the place of idol worship which was in line for punishment from God through the Assyrian scourge. Being a man of the farm, he thought that it was the large cities that were corrupting the pure country folk: “What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the sin of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?” (Micah 1: 5)

Therefore, he thought that both of those cities would be taken by the Assyrians because of the sins found therein. Micah had never had an inkling of these evils. He had believed, as I have quoted, that evil came from Jerusalem, but at last he saw what Isaiah had seen and cried out against—that the evil from the city came from the pressure of the aristocracy against the poor, and he understood for the first time the meaning of class or social struggle. Now Micah, being a provincial at heart, spoke in a blunt, perhaps I might say, inelegant manner, because the truth is that he lacked the delicacy of the urban prophet, and his descriptions are vivid and forceful, all the more since, because he was a country man, the city aristocrats and wealthy refused to listen to him, and heckled him whenever they could, and Micah's eloquence became all the more uncouth and belligerent as he spoke:

Hear now, you heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel:
Is it not for you to know justice, you who hate the good and love the evil?
You, who eat the flesh of my people, and who strip the skin from the bodies,
You, who lay bare their bones, and devour the flesh of my people?
You break their bones in pieces, and chop them up for the soup pot.
Even as meat in the pot and flesh for the cauldron.
Then you cry out to the Lord for protection;
But He will not answer you, He will hide His face from you,
For you have debased your deeds with evil.
(Micah 3: 1 – 4)

Having lashed out at the evil rulers of the people, Micah then turned to the false prophets, who told the aristocrats what they wanted to hear: “Thus says Yahweh about the people who lead astray my people, who when they bite with their teeth, they call out, ‘Peace,’ But him who puts not food in their mouth; against him they declare, ‘War.’” (Micah 3: 5)

And shortly thereafter he testifies against the priests as well:

Her head men render judgment for bribes,
Her priests give instruction for gain
And her prophets divine for money.
Yet they lean upon the Lord, saying
"Is not the Lord in the midst of us?
Misfortune shall not come upon us."
(Micah 3: 11)

He therefore prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, for he felt that continued sin could only lead to death, and that God could not help unless righteous conditions

enabled His ministers to make contact with the people: “Therefore, on account of you, Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become as a heap of ruins, and the temple mount, but a bare hill in a forest.” (Micah 3: 12)

Later, both Jeremiah and I, as well as Urijah, prophesied the Temple's fall, and in each case we were brought to trial—Jeremiah escaping without punishment because nothing had happened to Micah. Now, when Micah prophesied ruin to the Temple of Jerusalem, this sanctuary had not become the holy precinct it became in after years. In Micah's day other shrines such as Beth-el and Dan had been used and considered by the Israelites with great veneration, regardless of their debased form of ritual, so that the Jerusalem Temple at Mt. Zion had not attained that sacredness that characterized it a century or so later, when Jeremiah spoke forth, and also when I came to remind Judeans that their material Temple could be easily destroyed—a fact that infuriated them all the more since their first Temple, built by Solomon, had been destroyed by the Babylonians as informed by Jeremiah.

I felt the same way as Micah did when I preached in Palestine. My message, in addition to the glad tidings of the Father's Love, which I preached constantly, was social and political. By that I meant that people, by accepting the New Birth, could thereby eliminate sin from their hearts and bring about a new era of the brotherhood of man, where all the people would be equal before the law and justice and righteousness would prevail in the land. And I also meant that the Divine Love would give the people an insight into the transitory nature of the Roman overlordship, and with this Love in their hearts, enable them to overcome the Roman yoke and remain secure in their faith in God and be peaceful. Thus the fire of the Zealots would have to be transformed into a warm glow of understanding, and the rebellions leading to the Temple's destruction and Bar Kochba's futile insurrection avoided.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 37

Received July 29, 1960.

MICAH AND THE PREDICTION OF BETHLEHEM.

I am here, Jesus.

There is one passage I wish to discuss in the Book of Micah; that is, Chapter 6, wherein God, through the prophet, pleads with Israel to return to Him in righteousness of conduct towards one's fellowman. He reminds them of the hideous acts of abomination found in the pagan worship of the neighboring Kings Balak of Moab and Balaam, son of Boer. Thus Micah declares that sacrifices of any kind are futile; only righteousness of heart and love of mercy are God's Will for mankind:

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves of a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or
With ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
*It has been told thee, O man, what is good,
And what the Lord doth require of thee;
Only to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God.*
(Micah 6: 6 – 8)

This passage, for beauty, power and excellence, has never been surpassed in the development of religious thought up to the time of the Divine Love, for what Micah gives here is nothing less than the essence of ethical religion, or the religion of human love. In fact, he teaches with the greatest simplicity what millions of people are seeking and have sought, throughout the ages, to discover—the meaning of religion. For, no, religion is not a matter of ritual and sacrifice for sin or for the appeasement of a deity; no, it is not the offerings of calves or rams or lambs, or oil, or the sacrifice of the firstborn, as early man thought it must be, and which is still being used in a metaphysical way by a modern church whose mistaken doctrine is that I, God's first and only son, had to be sacrificed on a cross for the appeasement of His wrath for man's sins.

No, God seeks not the sacrifice of animals, nor the fruit of the earth, nor of human beings, nor, indeed, any kind of sacrifice. No, He wants man to live with an abiding sense of, and the practice of, justice and mercy, and to know, humbly, that God is the Creator of your being, and holds you, so to speak, in the palm of His Hand.

As for the remainder of Micah's little book, Chapter 5 is the most famous passage, because it deals with the prophecy that has been thought to refer to my coming. Actually it comes after Chapter 3, which states that Jerusalem shall fall and the Temple destroyed, if the rulers of the Houses of Judah and Israel continued to work evil, abhor justice and build Zion, the Temple, with blood. But, continues Micah, there will one day come, as ruler in Judah, he who will do God's Will, bring justice and equity to all and rule with righteousness and mercy. This ruler, of course, would be, as had been then for centuries, of the House of David; so that Micah appeared to be simply awaiting a new king. I have already told you that Isaiah predicted a good

king in Hezekiah, who was an improvement over his predecessors, but not to the degree that Isaiah's words warranted. Now Micah used the same type of lyrical language, so that the king to come, and who did come, Hezekiah, is hardly recognizable by the prophecy of his coming. Here are Micah's words:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah,
Which art little to be among the thousands of Judah,
Out of thee shall he come forth unto Me,
That is to be ruler in Israel;
Whose goings forth are from of old, from ancient days.
Therefore will he give them up,
Until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth;
Then the residue of his brethren shall return with the
Children of Israel. (Micah 5: 2 – 3)

I shall continue with the remainder of this prophecy and explain its meanings, but I want to deal with the part first, as a full citation can and has led to confusion. In the first place Micah based his predictions on that part of Isaiah, let me quote: "Until the time that she who travaileth hath brought forth," which is suggested by Isaiah's: "Behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name 'Immanuel'." (Isaiah 7: 14)

You will notice that Micah also speaks of a son, rather than a child, a son who will be associated with the return of the Ten Tribes of Israel, or rather the return of a remnant from captivity in Assyria. Thus Micah predicting the ruler of the nation governing the survivors of the exiles as predicted long before; that is, the last passage attributed to Amos, this ruler (whose mother was pregnant with him at the time of Isaiah's writings) was born at Bethlehem Ephratah, to distinguish this Judean from another in Galilee, and refers to the city in which David was born. This is unusual, for the royal house of Judah lived in Jerusalem and the children were born in the royal palace. Now Isaiah did not mention it, for he assumed the birth would take place in the palace as always, but Micah made a point of referring to it, as I said, because Hezekiah was born in Bethlehem, where his mother Abi, daughter of Zechariah, had been resting, and Micah wrote many years after the event. The Book of Second Kings relates how well he was regarded:

And he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord;
According to all that David, his father, had done.
He removed the high places, and broke the pillars,
And cut down the Asherah, [Canaanite goddess of fertility].
He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel;
So that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah,
Nor among them that were before him.
(2 Kings 18: 3 – 5)

If we are to credit these words unconditionally, then Hezekiah was greater than David. But to continue: "For he clove to the Lord, he departed not from following Him, but kept His

Commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him, whither he went forth he prospered. . . ." (2 Kings 18: 6 – 7)

I have shown, however, that Hezekiah, in spite of warring successfully against the Philistines, was troubled with the coalition of Israel and Syria against Judah, and finally, with Assyria, and paid heavily in tribute to this nation, so that this chronicle, written by a religious priest, passes by in silence the king's imperfections and political troubles, as well as his weaknesses of personality, and stresses his reform of the Hebrew ritual, and elimination of the evils of the pagan-type worship that existed. Micah, however, continues his prophecy of the ruler from Bethlehem in a way that reminds us of the praises in Second Kings: "And he shall stand, and shall feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the Name of the Lord, his God; and they shall abide, for then shall he be great, unto the ends of the earth." (Micah 5: 4)

Now it is hard for me to tell exactly when Hezekiah was born, for Hezekiah himself, and Ahaz, do not remember, for there was no such exact measuring of time or dates such as you have today. But Hezekiah, by rapid calculation, was born just about or after the time Isaiah is known to have begun his prophecies about 738 BC, and he was not 25 years old when he began to reign, as Scriptures say, but 18 years old (according to the Jewish Encyclopedia, King of Judah, 720-692 BC). He reigned about 28 years until Manasseh became king at his death in 692 BC (According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, Manasseh succeeded his father, Hezekiah, at the age of 12, and ruled from 692 - 638 BC)

Now, in view of what has been written about Hezekiah, in the Second Book of Kings, you can readily understand the great expectations that both Isaiah and Micah had for the new King of Judah to be, and the fact is that for a time it did appear that the greatness of Hezekiah was to be fulfilled. That he was, with the years, a disappointment, is due to Hezekiah's own personality, but these prophets did express their prophecy of a ruler of the Hebrew people who would do the things of righteousness and walk in God's Path. And if Hezekiah did not live up to their prophecies, it did not mean that, in time to come, someone else born in Bethlehem of Judah could not make his appearance as ruler to bring justice and righteousness to the people.

From Bethlehem of Judah there could come unto the people, as Micah has said, a shepherd who would feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, and in the majesty of His Name, one who would bring to the people a true knowledge of God through the New Covenant preached by Jeremiah, wherein God's Love would bring immortality to His people and to all peoples, and make them secure in God's Land, His Celestial Heaven, to live there in peace and happiness and abundance of spiritual joys for all eternity.

So that while the prophecy of Micah referred, at first, to Hezekiah, the ideal nature of that prophecy was projected into time and across the centuries until the Christ should appear and bring through my coming the Father's Love to all mankind.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 38

Received: November 12, 1960.

THE JUDGMENT DAY AS VISIONED BY ZEPHANIAH.

I am here, Jesus.

Zephaniah ben Cushi, the prophet of the so-called day of God's wrath, was born in Jerusalem during the reign of King Manasseh about 665 BC His prophetic activity dates from the beginning of the Scythian invasion of Palestine about the year 636 BC Zephaniah was connected by blood to the royal house of Judah, for a superscription to the book of the prophet named Hezekiah the father of Zephaniah's grandfather: "The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah, the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amarlah, the son of Hezekiah." (Zephaniah 1: 1) His grandfather was an ancestor of that Gedaliah who became governor of Judeah after the fall of Jerusalem in 556 BC This naming of forebears was contrary to custom and indicated that the ancestry of the prophet went back to King Hezeklah, in the days of Isaiah. Zephaniah lived in Jerusalem near the Palace and he described its topography briefly:

Hark! a cry from the fish gate, and a wailing
From the New Quarter, and a great crashing
From the hills and a wailing from the
Inhabitants of Maktesh. . . and I will
Search Jerusalem with a lamp. (Zephaniah 1: 10 - 12)

(The fish gate was the north gate of the city used by the merchants of Tyre who brought dried fish to Jerusalem, the Second Quarter was in the north area in which Huldah, the prophetess, lived, and the Maktesh was the Tyropeion Valley between the east and west hills to the south of the city.)

He was one of those who felt that a reaction against the idolatry and the evil of Manasseh and his son, Ammon, was imperative if the land of Judah and its people were not to be destroyed. By this I do not mean that the kings alone were guilty, for many of the people had accepted the Assyrian deities and their rites, including even the abomination of human sacrifices, and those who had resisted to defend Jehovah and moral living had been persecuted and killed, and thus true religion in Judah had been compelled to exist underground, so to speak.

Being thus in a way connected with the royal household, and seeing the dissolute habits to be found among some of its members therein, a legacy from the reigns of Manasseh and Ammon, like the worshiping of idols and the adoption of foreign attire, Zephaniah found that only the prophetic books of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah held the secret of health and prosperity for the nation. He studied them, and contacted individuals and scribes who, like Shapan, were in agreement with him. And when he witnessed the approach of the Scythians from the North, he felt the time was ripe to express his warning of disaster. At this time, Josiah, the

ruler, was in his minority and the government was being administered by regents who were afraid of what a barbarian attack of Jerusalem might bring. They realized that there was a great need to arouse the people to the perils which threatened, and they knew that only a spiritual reawakening could do this.

When the Scythians reached the Egyptian frontiers they were loaded with gifts to leave without inflicting damage, and they did, but, on their way back through Palestine, they plundered the Temple of Aphrodite in Ashkelon and took possession of Beth - Shean.

There was need of alarm, indeed, and Jeremiah was, of course, the great voice to arouse the Judeans, but Zephaniah also raised his voice to warn of disaster.

Now Josiah had become the ruler when his father, the evil Ammon, had been assassinated by his servants, in 639 BC, after two years of great suffering for the land and the people, and the regents who guided Josiah had to turn away from the things he had seen his father practice, and had to teach him to walk in the path of the decimated followers of Jehovah; their instructing him in the prophets, and the warning of the prophets, that Judah, like Israel, would fall unless righteousness was restored to the land, eventually had their effect upon him. Aiding them in this task was also Hilkiah, the husband of Huldah, the prophetess, who had charge of the royal wardrobe.

And it was none other but Zephaniah himself who was most instrumental in the indoctrination of the young Josiah. Thus, in 635 BC, at the age of 12, the young king ordered the destruction of the Baal and the Asherim, the fertility symbols so repugnant to the true Hebrews of all periods, when these were permitted to desecrate the holy places and, in 629, when he attained his majority at the age of 18, he began to repair and adorn the Temple. It was while these repairs were being conducted that, as I have said, the Book of Deuteronomy came to the attention of the king, giving rise to what is known as the great reform of Josiah.

Now Zephaniah could not have begun the prophecy of the Judgment Day before 639, for the previous king, Ammon, would have surely deposed him, had he so attempted, and it was prior to 635 BC, because Zephaniah cried out against the idols then existing in the land. In the years between, (638-636 BC), the Scythians had moved close to the borders of Palestine, and Zephaniah thus spoke his sermons in the Temple. He spoke to awaken the people to the urgency of reform to head off destruction from the threatening advance of the Scythians and also to give support to those in the royal house, of which he formed a part, who sought to bring about the return to ethical Judaism among the many who had accepted the Assyrian and other pagan rites and worship during the preceding half century. Zephaniah was then in his late twenties, for, although he cannot remember exactly the year of his birth, it was about 665 BC, and he was at that time well versed in the law and the prophets. His one purpose, then, was ritual reform and true worship of God; yet, as an aristocrat, he was not overly concerned, as was Jeremiah, somewhat later, with social reform, but he coupled worship of Jehovah with righteousness of conduct as a religious duty incumbent upon all believers.

Thus, in the great holiday of spring, when the Passover was celebrated with the sacrifice of the lamb—although it was not until later that Josiah re-instituted the Pesah (Hebrew for Passover) as the great celebration of deliverance from Egypt. Zephaniah, in the spirit of Amos, declared a terrible day of judgment: “Bow before the Lord Jehovah, for near is the day of Jehovah, for Jehovah has prepared a sacrifice, He hath sanctified His guests.” (Zephaniah 1: 7)

These guests, being "sanctified," meant "destroyed"—Judeans and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the heathen priestlings, who sanctified the heavenly luminaries from the housetops, the hypocritical Jews who worshipped both God and Milcom, the god of the Ammonites, and the officers and royal princes of Josiah's household who resisted reform and wore Assyrian dress, who practiced such pagan customs as leaping over the "threshold" and who thus, in their superstition, sought to avoid contact with the spirits of humans and animals who were sacrificed and buried in the foundation of houses (as protection against invaders or plunderers, originally, but who in the popular mind gradually developed into evil spirits). Zephanlah, was antagonistic to the belief in spirits, as were the earlier prophets, because it recognized spirit power independent of Jehovah.

Zephanlah's imagery of battle was taken from Amos 1: 14 and 22:

So will I kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah,
And It shall devour the palaces thereof,
With shouting in the day of battle,
With a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:
And Moab shall die with tumult,
With shouting, and with the sound of the horn.

Zephaniah elaborated upon this description of terror by adding the line of darkness and gloom to a scene depicting warfare and terror to inhabitants who cannot fight with assurance because they do not have the moral courage given by adherence to God:

Near is the day of Jehovah! Near and rapidly approaching. . . .
That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and
Battle-cry, against the fortified cities
And against the high battlements.
(Zephanaiah 1: 14 – 16)

Thus did Zephaniah warn of Judah's destruction for commission of sins against the Lord's moral laws.

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SERMON 39

Received: November 12, 1960.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ALL NATIONS TO BE SAVED.

I am here, Jesus.

Not only did Zephaniah predict exile for Judah, but also the wrath of God visited upon other nations because of their immorality and evils. Previous prophets had so declared, and Zephaniah was convinced of this portent. At any rate, Zephaniah predicted the ruin of the Philistine towns near the coast, on the route taken by the Scythians, and he could write what Amos had previously predicted. For Amos had stated:

So will I send a fire on the wall of Gaza
And I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod,
And him that holdeth the scepter from Ashkelon,
And I will turn My Hand against Ekron;
And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish,
Saith the Lord God. (Amos 1: 7 – 8)

Zephaniah thus declared: “For Gaza shall be forsaken; Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod — by noon they shall rout her and Ekron be torn apart. Woe to the dwellers by the seashore; people of the Cherethites; the word of Jehovah is against thee, O Canaan, land of the Philistines, . . .” (Zephaniah 2: 4 – 5)

And when he foresaw the destruction of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, which took place in 606 BC, he could read what Micah had said: “And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword.” (Micah 5: 6)

Thus Zephaniah, in his agreement with Micah, went on to predict Nineveh's destruction: “And I will stretch out My Hand. . . and destroy Assyria; and I will make Nineveh a desolation, dry as the wilderness.” (Zephaniah 2: 13)

Zephaniah points out that God is impartial, and that other evil-doing nations of that time would be destroyed, not only small places like Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Philistine city states, but also Egypt (called Ethiopia because of the Ethiopian ruler), Assyria and Nineveh. The Lord is Lord of the entire earth and His Judgment is executed upon all peoples because of sins. This judgment will be destruction of everything on the face of the earth, not only man but animals and nature, for evil in nature results from evil in man's heart.

Zephaniah's indictment, as far as Judah is concerned, starts with the king's sons and the members of the royal house —“roaring lions”. . . (Zephaniah 3: 3)— at a time when Josiah was still in his minority and his brothers and cousins still imitated the Assyrian ways and evils. But it

also includes the judges, who are “wolves of the desert,” and her prophets who are braggarts and faithless men, while the priests have profaned that which is holy and do violence to the law. The people have not received correction (Zephaniah 3: 7), they have not sought the Lord, and if they once knew Him, turned from Him and His Commands (Zephaniah 1: 6). They have become insolent and dependent upon their own resources, saying in their hearts, “The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.” (Zephaniah 1: 12) Yes, they had ceased to feel that God was their living, eternal Father, and that His Hand was stretched forth over them, to help them, if they sought Him, and to keep them from the evils of the barbarous times that prevailed. Rather is Jerusalem rebellious against God and bloodstained with the blood of righteous men.

Yet Jehovah shall not destroy all the inhabitants of the earth, but cause those who are repentant and faithful to abide, and even though Judeans might be living in exile yet after the Judgment Day, this remnant would be caused to be brought back to their own land, for the righteous of the other nations would permit this in obedience to God's Will. Some writers of Zephaniah's prophecy believe that those passages of redemption through purification and return from exile do not represent the prophet's own hand, for he wrote some thirty years or more before the last exile in 597 BC. But these commentators do not consider that Zephaniah had before him the prophetic writings of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, and it was an article of faith with them that Judea would go into exile, and if Zephaniah believed these prophets as expressing the Word of God, he had to believe that this exile would actually take place. However, as their writings, or at least appendages to their writings, especially Amos and Micah, insisted on a subsequent return from exile and redemption from sin by return to the Lord, so did Zephaniah harbor such prophecies of return and forgiveness, and thus one should not be ready to ascribe his Chapter 3 as belonging to a later hand, but rather that it was really Zephaniah declaring, as did the earlier prophets, a day of ingathering and purification.

Thus Zephaniah exhorts with a great sense of God's sway over all the peoples of the earth: “ Seek ye the Lord, all ye humble of the earth, that have executed His Ordinance; seek righteousness, seek humiliation; it may be that ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.” (Zephaniah 2: 3)

And he speaks of the returning Hebrews as “a poor and afflicted people, and they shall take refuge in the Name of the Lord,” poor in material goods and politically, indeed, but rich in the treasure of the Father's Love and His protection of them. When I spoke of the humble and oppressed to those who listened to my sermons, I spoke here in the spirit of Zephaniah, identifying ourselves with the plight of the poor and the humble, and preaching that safety, salvation and integrity of the soul lay in trust in Him.

The prophet then goes on to predict: “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” (Zephaniah 3: 13)

With Chapter 3, verses 14 to 20, Zephaniah strikes a note of exultation that forms a startling contrast to the grim and gloomy passages of the Judgment Day. And of course writers find it difficult to see this as the prophet's, but Zephaniah was not writing now in a prophetic vein, but reiterating sincerely what Amos and Micah had previously declared. Yet his outburst of exultation and joy here is so exuberant and the style so personal and convincing that it was used by the Second Isaiah, whom I shall discuss in detail in later sermons, as the starting point of his great writings.

Thus did Zephaniah rejoice:

Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel;
Be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. . . The
King of Israel, even the Lord is in the midst of thee. . . The Lord thy God
is in the midst of thee, a mighty One Who will save; He will rejoice over
thee with joy, He will be silent in His Love, He will joy over thee with
singing. (Zephaniah 3: 14 – 17)

The tremendously significant line, “He will be silent In His Love,” indicative of the Divine Love which the Father possesses as His greatest Attribute, and with which He loves His children, and which Zephaniah knew is God's Essence, caused difficulty among Hebrew scholars, for they thought the line meant that the deepness of God's Love was as silent ecstasy, but was contradicted by God's rejoicing through singing. Rabbi Rashi's explanation, for example, that God will, in His Love, cover up Israel's sins in silence, is unacceptable, for God does not cover up sins, but, by His Laws, causes the awakening and the workings in man's consciousness of remorse and a sense of justice. But Zephaniah actually meant that while God's Divine Love by Itself is so deep as to be silent, yet the expression of that Love, which could be indignation and wrath in the presence of sin and evil, was one of rejoicing and singing in the presence of justice and righteousness, especially when these represented the return of His wayward children to Him. You will remember I used this as a theme in my sermon on the Prodigal Son.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 40

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JEREMIAH'S ANCESTRY IN THE REIGN OF SAUL AND DAVID.

I am here, Jesus.

Jeremiah is one of the most important, if not the greatest, prophet that God was able to use for the social and religious uplifting of His people in the centuries of slow advancement for Judah. He came from a long line of rural priests, who embraced all the trappings associated with the ancient country shrines, yet who, withal, remained firm as a rock in their faith and worship of Jehovah. These priests could look back to their ancestor, Ahimelech who, in the reign of King Saul, befriended David, as the young fugitive from the unhappy monarch sought food and shelter

at the little temple of the Israelite village of Nob. Ahimelech, the high priest there, gave David and his men the old bread off the altar, when the new provision of bread was offered in prayer to God.

Now David, who with his friends at the time was desperately hungry, told Ahimelech that he was on a mission in the service of Saul and not a refugee from the wrath of the king, and thus the priest's act of distribution of the bread was one of pure kindness, and never had he thought to doubt David's word, because his soul was pure and above the level of material aberrations; yet an Edomite herdsman, out of malice for a servant of the Lord, and in hope of a reward for his information, went straightway to Saul and accused Ahimelech of treason for aiding David. The furious king ordered 85 of the priests to his palace at Hebron and had them slain in the courtyard at the hand of the Edomite.

One person escaped this repulsive deed, Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech; and through Abiathar it was that Jeremiah was descended from this kindly priest who had thus fallen victim to the dark minds and souls of the Judah of the tenth century BC

Now Abiathar, a youth of about twenty, aware that he must seek safety in hiding from Saul's soldiers, joined David and his men, soon to grow into a company of some six hundred outlaws. As was natural, Abiathar served as the priest for this assemblage. He followed him in battle, in exploits, in adventures, and became the chief priest of the land when the events took place which made David the ruler of Israel. Eventually, his duties for David's great kingdom necessitated an assistant, and a younger man, Zadok, was named. Now Zadok was ambitious to become chief priest, and Bathsheba, and a certain group with her, promised him this promotion if he would help in a plan to place her son, Solomon, on the throne of Israel, instead of Abiathar, the oldest living son of David. The gallant old king, when about to pass on into the spirit world, was quietly approached by Bathsheba, Zadok and this group, and, in his weakness of mind and will, was virtually pushed into agreeing to Solomon's ascension to the throne, whereupon they anointed Solomon king with indecorous and, I might say, indecent haste, not even waiting for David to die.

The new monarch, true to his promise, had Abiathar removed from the priestly service and banished from Jerusalem, declaring Abiathar worthy of death but sparing the old priest out of respect for his father, King David. With the recollection of his own father's death at the hands of another monarch, Saul, Abiathar, disgusted and heartbroken, returned with his family to his village Nob, found it in ruins, and built a house on a small piece of property just north of the town that had belonged to his father. Eventually, his family grew with the years, and a village came into being called Anathoth. The people returned to the ancestral vocation of priest, trusting more in the Goodness and Mercy of God rather than in the base hearts of kings and temporal rulers, and surviving the destruction of the village in 701 BC at the time of the Assyrian advance against Jerusalem. And thus it was that Jeremiah, son of Hilklah, the priest, was born in the year 649 BC about the time that the worst king of Judah, Manasseh, was seeking with unparalleled barbarity to squeeze from the hearts and minds of the people the love and remembrance of the Lord God of Israel. (2 Kings 21: 11, 17)

It would seem, from the circumstances, that Jeremiah ben Hilklah was destined to follow in the footsteps of his pious forebears and become a priest in the service of an altar of God in the little village of Anathoth, only three miles north of Jerusalem, living a quiet uneventful life and submerged in the affairs that prevailed on earth as they developed in those days and in that area

of the world. But the background and the personality of Jeremiah decreed otherwise, for such was Jeremiah's heart and such the land and the history, that God found He could use him as the torchbearer of the true Hebraic religion of justice and mercy of democratic principle and equality for all, as a guide for a conquered and exiled people, and as the hope for a returned remnant, to repair and rebuild towards the establishment of an ideal home for the Hebrews, in an ideal kingdom of righteousness and ethical relationship amongst men as brothers in kinship and as the children of God, and lastly as the Promise of God that in the fullness of time He would take away from Israel the flinty heart of profit and evil, and pour out upon them His Own Spirit of Love and Mercy.

Jeremiah himself, even as a young boy, knew that he was to be in the service of God, not as a village priest, but as His prophet. In his book, which he wrote and edited in later life, he tells us of God's call to him: "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jeremiah 1: 5) There have been many theologians who have taken these words to support claims of a virgin birth for me, Jesus, but if you read carefully, you will realize that Jeremiah, as he has told me, simply meant that God knows the souls of his created beings before they are incarnated in the flesh through conception, and that Jeremiah's soul had been entrusted by God to be His prophet, or, to be His Instrument on earth to show the way to God's Righteousness and Mercy.

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SERMON 41

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JEREMIAH'S BOYHOOD AT ANATHOTH.

I am here, Jesus.

It may seem strange to you that there was a certain relationship between Jeremiah and Joseph, who, even as a little boy, knew that he was a man after God's own heart, and who, relating these things to his brothers, incurred their jealousy and had him set apart from the others, so that they threw him into a dry well and had him sold into slavery in Egypt. The children of Anathoth were hostile to Jeremiah because of his words of closeness to the Father; they could not understand it, and resented it, and Jeremiah, on his part, instead of playing with these children, took delight, rather, in the reading of the prophets, and he studied the preaching of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah and the works of Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, learning from them the demands of

justice, righteousness and mercy, as well as the deep significance of God's Divine Love for His people, which, as God's prophet and spokesman of His Will, they had emphasized and insisted upon as the way of knowing God.

Jeremiah at times also visited the places where these prophets had spoken. Jerusalem, where Isaiah had preached in the marketplace and at the gates, was only three miles to the southwest. Samuel's home site was three miles northwest of Anathoth, and Elijah and Elisha had done their work in Ephraim, on the east bank of the Jordan, also to the north. Thus there was combined in Jeremiah a soul sensitive to the nearness of God, and to the Will of God as the Hebrew prophets had known and expressed it, and the era of history which had produced these prophets. He knew, too, that these prophets had suffered because of their faith in God and their uncompromising stand that His Commandments be obeyed, and he felt that this would happen to him as well.

As a young lad, Jeremiah would spend some of his time, when not studying, becoming familiar with the district in which he lived. He took great interest in the birds and the animals, having compassion for them that stemmed from his sensitive soul and his regard for the forms of life which the Father had created; He learned the habits of the wild beasts like that of the lion and the wolf that inhabited the valley of the Jordan, the smaller animals that made their abode in the hill country to the north, as well as goats, cows and fowl of the farms. Jeremiah's love of nature and animals, and especially the birds of his countryside, is unmatched in the Scriptures.

Jeremiah himself has told me that the trouble he experienced with his family was due to the fact that they insisted upon his becoming a priest of Anathoth, a vocation he detested. To him, this priesthood meant the sacrificial ritual, and the slaughter of the lamb and other animals, in the prescribed fashion of the debased rites reintroduced by Manasseh, with phallic symbols and ashera and other throwbacks to the Cannanite fertility practices, both carnal and repellant. Later he described these rites in the coarse language they provoked.

With his respect for animal life, and with the protests of the earlier prophets in mind against sacrifices conducted in pagan-like manner by corrupt priests, and with deep insight into the Nature of God as a God of Justice and Mercy, he refused to become a local "high place" priest as his parents commanded. The result was that they thought he was an apostate against God, and his neighbors were also much incensed against him for his perversity in seeking to break the established pattern of things in the village.

In all this, though, one must remember that as Jeremiah grew to early manhood, the rites of all the shrines of the land had been revoltingly debased by the orders of the King, Manasseh, so that, as we have seen, religious worship was little more than Cannanite fertility rites. To this, Jeremiah, true to the worship of God in the Hebrew spirit of Hezekiah, could never consent, and as a result, he became a virtual outcast in his own village. He lost the one woman in his life whom he really loved, for her parents would not consent to marriage with this rebel, and later he wrote about his affair in Anathoth: "I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies." (Jeremiah 12: 7)

As a matter of fact, those who preferred the more spiritual worship of Jehovah, as Jeremiah did, were being persecuted by Manasseh, and by the priests of the high places, like those of Anathoth, and one is not so surprised to find out that a plot was formed to poison him, discovered to come from his own family and the neighbors; "But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying let us

destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.” (Jeremiah 11: 19) But Jeremiah escaped out of the hand of his uncompromising family, and out of the hand of hostile neighbors, and saw the death of Manasseh in 638 BC and that of his son, Amon, two years later, and the reign of the child King Josiah, who, after a ten-year regency, began to rule for himself, in 636 BC

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SERMON 42

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JEREMIAH’S CALL AS A PROPHET OF GOD.

I am here, Jesus.

About this time the nomads from the north, the Scythians, a people of southwest Russia, began to make their terrifying raids into the land of Israel, and Jeremiah, like Zephaniah, felt the call to prophesy in the Name of God. Jeremiah tells us it was in the 13th year of Josiah's reign, that is, the year 623 BC when Jeremiah was approaching his 27th year. That year had been a troubled one for the prophet in his love life, and he felt that he had been appointed for this trouble by God with a prospective bride, as God had been having His troubles with Israel, His bride, as Hosea had expressed it. It was one of the reasons why Jeremiah never did marry, as he thought that what had applied to Hosea was in a manner applicable to him as well. He also thought that the Scythians would ravage and destroy Judah and, in the terror that gripped the people on all sides, that the time for his commencement as a prophet of God had come. He hesitated for quite a while until he observed an almond tree which had begun to bloom and realized that all things must come to pass in the fullness of time, and that the time was now ripe for him to raise his voice as God might dictate. For his opening page, which tells of his call, he had recourse to Isaiah, but made some interesting changes; there is no imagery, and no references to being unclean, or being purified by a live coal in the hand of a Seraph; instead, he is converted from a “child” into a messenger of God, who touches his mouth with His Hand, and assures him of God's Protection. This is the first mention of direct contact of God with a mortal; it is, of course, figurative only, for God has no “Hand” in the sense that humans or spirits conceive of it to be, but it does show how close Jeremiah felt he was to the Deity:

For the Lord said unto me, “Say not I am a child,

For to whomsoever I shall send thee; Thou shalt go;
And whatsoever I shall command thee; Thou shalt speak.
Be not afraid of them, for I am with thee. . . , saith the Lord.”
Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth;
And the Lord said unto me, “Behold, I have put my words into thy mouth.”
(Jeremiah 1: 7 – 9)

These words were very important for Jeremiah to carry out the designs of the Father, inasmuch as his first sermons attacked the abuses in the sacrificial rites which his family and neighbors in Anathoth, as well as local places all over Judah and the Israel of the post-exile period, espoused and practiced as part of their religion. He saw the advance of the ruthless Scythians as the hand of God risen to strike down His people because of their continual adherence to the paganism of Manasseh and Amon.

Now Manasseh and Amon had made of religion in Jerusalem a literal inferno of heathen rites. Worship of Moloch, popularized by Ahaz in the days of Isaiah, became the accepted practice. This was human sacrifice, that terrible abomination in the Sight of God, which had been practiced in the dim days of past milleniums when man was struggling to evolve to a higher order of religious concept than that of barbarian naturalism and its hideous superstitions. The firstborn child was brought to the Valley of Hinnon, southwest of Jerusalem, and burned alive in the arms of the idol which was heated red hot. To make things utterly detestable, this Moloch was a corruption of the name Melech, meaning king, and there were those who believed that this abomination was being practiced so as to serve God. Other forms of paganism found at this time, thanks to the baleful energy of Manasseh, but which pale beside that of human sacrifice, were the worship of the Assyrlan deities—Ishtar, queen of heaven; and Tammuz; Adonis gardens, and the so-called dying god—and the cult of heavenly luminaries, sacred prostitution in the temple, fortune-telling and astrology. All those people in Jerusalem and elsewhere who resisted these things had to do so in secret, and in privacy, but there was a core of such people throughout the land, and Jeremiah was one of them.

Now it happened that Josiah attained his majority as king in 625 BC, at the age of 18, and an event took place which, after a while, enabled Jeremiah to preach reform of the sacrificial rites for some time without being put to death—and that was the mysterious discovery of the Book of Deuteronomy. I might mention, in passing, that this year coincided with the death of Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian monarch, when signs of deterioration were apparent in this empire, and it was thought the time for a great reform for genuine Hebrew religion was come.

The high priest at the time, Hilkiah (not Jeremiah's father), found in the collection box, located at the Temple's door, a scroll said to have been written by Moses. It was not, of course, having been written and edited by a committee of pious elders of Jerusalem who were very zealous that the idolatrous rites be eliminated in favor of true Hebrew worship of God, together with the laws dealing with social behavior, so that powerful people might not, because of their positions, be able to impede justice. The Book of Deuteronomy is, therefore, a great humanitarian document and it is only in the purely doctrinal aspect that it became rigid.

Now this committee was aware that Josiah was going to collect money for the repair of the Temple, and thus they quietly left their scroll where they knew it would be found. Hilkiah delivered the scroll to Shapan, the scribe who read it, and he presented it to the king. Josiah was

greatly moved and inquired of a religious woman, Huldah, who was the daughter-in-law of Tivah, whose father, Harhas, was keeper of the wardrobe and a member of the committee. Huldah, who was also very much in sympathy with the reform movement, knew exactly what to say: she delivered a prophecy of disaster to Judah, in God's Name, because the people had forsaken the Lord and had offered sacrifices unto other gods. But as for Josiah, since his heart was tender and had humbled himself before the Lord, he would die in peace and not see all the evil which He would bring to Judah. It is interesting to observe that Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo in 608 BC, before the Babylonian victory of 596 BC and the destruction of the Temple and the exile.

The Bible tells us that Josiah reigned 31 years but this is erroneous by three years; he reigned 28 years, and was only 36 years old when he met his death. Josiah therefore did die before the Babylonians came to destroy Jerusalem, and thus Huldah had an inkling into his early death; how, she could not tell; she thought it might be through illness; neither could she foresee the Egyptian advance through Judah to help Assyria, nor Pharaoh Necho's defeat by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish in 605 BC and Judah's becoming a vassal to the Babylonians.

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SERMON 43

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JEREMIAH'S EARLY SERMONS.

I am here, Jesus.

Now when Jeremiah began to preach, the reform of Josiah had been going on for more than two years. But while Jerusalem itself, with its ardent reformers in the city, welcomed the changes for the most part, the country priests were reluctant to adhere to Josiah's dictates. They lost their importance as local priests, as well as their income, and were transformed to serve in minor posts in the Temple of Jerusalem. At the same time herdsmen began to make a good livelihood selling their oxen, sheep and other animals to the temple for ritual purposes, and Jeremiah was one of these. Not that he was a shepherd, but a dealer, and was well acquainted with business and trading. How well he was versed in legal terms may be seen in the document preserved in the Book of Jeremiah 32: 7 – 17, when he bought property from his nephew in Anathoth, at a time when the Babylonians were attacking Judah.

Jeremiah thus began to preach under the influence of the reform of Josiah — the destruction of the evil of worshipping false gods and the immoral practices associated with them. Like Hosea, he refers to Israel as the bride:

I remember for thee the affection of thy youth,
The Love of thine espousals;
How thou wentest after Me in the wilderness
Israel is the Lord's hallowed portion,
His first fruits of the increase. . . .
(Jeremiah 2: 2 – 3)

And then he goes on to complain:

Saith the Lord;. . . .
My people have committed two evils;
They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,
And have hewed them out cisterns. . . that can hold no water.
(Jeremiah 2: 13)

Jeremiah meant that the people had forsaken the Living God for idols. I made use of this imaging of God, or “the fountain of living waters,” in my own preaching when I came to Palestine to announce the glad tidings of the Father's Love. I used other material written by Jeremiah, because what he said was true and was applicable to my own preaching.

In the same way Jeremiah made use of Deuteronomy in its insistence that the believer in God need not be afraid to act or face trouble, for God was with him. Deuteronomy 1: 23 has Moses say: “Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee; go up and possess it; as the Lord, the God of thy fathers, hath spoken unto thee; fear not, neither be dismayed.” And later in Chapter 1, when the Hebrew exiles fear the Amorites, Moses is made to say: “Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord thy God who goeth before you, He shall fight for you, according to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes.” (Deuteronomy 1: 29 – 30) Thus did Jeremiah take heart to talk out against the idol worshippers, and those priests of debased rites, even of his people in Anathoth, because he had faith in Deuteronomy and that the Father would help him to encounter and overcome evils. And Jeremiah wrote:

Thou therefore gird up thy Ioins, and arise,
and speak unto them all that I command thee;
Be not dismayed at them. . . .
And they shall fight against thee;
But they shall not prevail against thee;
For I am with thee, saith the Lord,
To deliver thee."
(Jeremiah 1: 17, 19)

And thus Jeremiah set forth to preach putting aside the pagan and immoral rites and the worshipping of the Cananite and Assyrian gods, and he calls Judah the unfaithful wife who played the harlot. Thus Jeremiah took Hosea's attitude towards Israel as pertinent to Judah, and he saw, as Hosea did, that God was the husband who loved with His Love, this erring wife: "Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 3: 20)

And like the forgiving husband who still loves his wife and seeks only that she mend her ways to have his love, Jeremiah wrote with great power:

If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord;
Yea, return unto Me; and if thou wilt put away thy
Detestable things out of My sight, and wilt not waver;
And wilt swear: As the Lord liveth, in truth, in justice,
And in righteousness; Then shall the nations bless them-
selves by Him, And in Him shall they glory.
(Jeremiah 4: 1 – 2)

But because the people do not return to the Lord, declares Jeremiah, they and the land will be destroyed. When he first wrote his tirades here, Jeremiah was thinking of the Scythians, but when their raids subsided without sacking Jerusalem, he rewrote his verses many years later to conform to the Babylonian peril. Like Amos, he has a word for the overly dressed women and their arts of enticement:

And thou, that art spoiled, what doest thou?
That thou clothest thyself in scarlet,
That thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold,
That thou enlargest thine eyes with paint?
In vain dost thou make thyself fair.
(Jeremiah 4: 30)

As Jeremiah continued to talk to the common people in the marketplace, In the street of the bakers, the gates of the city, and later when he lived in Jerusalem itself, he became increasingly aware of a situation which, as a resident of a small hamlet like Anathoth, he was unaware of, and which affected him more and more deeply; the exploitation and the grinding down of the poor by the priestly class and the aristocrats of the city, and the relegation of the underprivileged to an inferior position as Hebrew citizens of Judah.

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SERMON 44

Received: July 19, 1960.

JEREMIAH IN JERUSALEM.

I am here, Jesus.

When we come to Chapter 5, beginning: “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,” Jeremiah had lived long enough in the capital and had seen enough to make him realize that the worshipping of false gods in themselves was not that which would provoke evil conditions to overwhelm the land, nor the horrible practices resulting from them; but also the unethical behavior of the superior and wealthier classes towards the economically and socially downtrodden, as well as their licentious living which the Ten Commandments had expressly forbidden. Yet the poor themselves were guilty of not doing justly, of not seeking the truth way of the Lord: “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if there be a man; if there be any that doeth justice, that seeketh truth; and I will pardon her (the city).” (Jeremiah 5: 1)

This, of course, hearkened back to Genesis 18: 32, in the old story wherein God promised Abraham that Sodom would be spared if there were found only ten righteous people therein. Jeremiah not very subtly was comparing Jerusalem to the wrecked city of Sodom, and thus aroused much resentment in all quarters against himself. Moreover, the prophet, on re-editing his writings many decades later, refused to delete or revise his words—for, in his deep sensitivity to sin and impurity, he could not find one righteous man. Later, he complained: “For from the least of them, even unto the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for gain; and from the prophet even unto the priest, everyone dealeth falsely.” (Jeremiah 6: 13)

Jeremiah was especially incensed at the breaking of the Commandments of adultery and covetousness:

And when I had fed them to the full, they committed adultery,
And assembled themselves in troops at the harlots' houses.
They are become as well-fed horses, lusty stallions;
Every one neighed after his neighbor's wife.
Shall I not punish for these things, saith the Lord. . .?
(Jeremiah 5: 7 – 9)

Now Jeremiah felt, when the statues to the different luminaries had been destroyed in the Temple and in the local high places, with no disastrous aftermath to show that stellar worship was futile, that the people should realize the heavenly bodies in themselves were simply creations of the Father and that men should worship the Creator, not the product. He told the people they were blind not to see this. He has God saying:

Declare this in the house of Jacob, and announce it in Judah, saying:
Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding;
That have eyes, and see not; that have ears, and hear not;
Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at my presence. . . ?
(Jeremiah 5: 20 – 22)

In my own generation I felt as Jeremiah did and in some sermons I used similar words to indicate lack of comprehension when I revealed to them the Presence of the Father in my soul with the Divine Love.

It took some time to realize that God, as God of Righteousness and Mercy, could not call the Temple of Jerusalem His house of prayer, if the people who worshipped there were unclean in heart and deed. As I have mentioned, the prophet Micah, in the days when Assyria was on the march, had written of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple saying: “. . .and Jerusalem shall become heaps; and the mountain of the house [the Temple area] as the high places of a forest.” (Micah: 3: 12)

Jeremiah came to that conclusion and spoke out against the Temple only after many years of silence as a prophet. Following his outburst against the immorality in the high places and the social injustices in Jerusalem, he had expected the Scythians of the north to come down and take the city, plundering and ravaging. It had not occurred, because the Scythians had turned off to the east in search of easier and more accessible prey and, in fact, after a troubled generation, their raids ceased to be a matter of concern. The people, therefore, felt that Jeremiah had not proven to be an accurate prophet and turned from listening to him, and the fact is that, with the land secure against enemy forays and attacks, there was no longer a need for him to voice warnings of disaster. If God permitted, was Jeremiah to protest?

Thus Jeremiah was silent for 14 years, dealing in herds and flocks for his livelihood, and studying the Hebrew laws and the prophets as well as seeking to know what God wanted of him. Then, once more, disaster suddenly looked Judah in the face. In a previous sermon I referred to the death of good King Josiah in 608 BC at the hands of Pharaoh Necho, who had assembled an army and passed up the highway through Palestine to help the Assyrians in their war against the Babylonians. The Pharaoh requested Josiah to meet him at a conference at Megiddo, where he could gauge the attitude of Judah towards the Assyro-Babylonian conflict and seek to persuade Josiah to join him. Now Josiah, under the influence of Isaiah's preaching against alliances with Egypt, refused to join Pharaoh Necho against Babylonia. Enraged, and having Josiah in his power, the Pharaoh had him shot with an arrow as he was leaving in his chariot; Josiah died on reaching Jerusalem, then imprisoned his son Jehoahaz and made another son, Jehoiakim, the ruler in Judah.

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SERMON 45

Received: July 21, 1960.

JEREMIAH BROUGHT TO TRIAL AT THE TEMPLE.

I am here, Jesus.

Now Pharaoh Necho, I repeat, was defeated in battle at Carchemish, by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian monarch, in 605 BC and Jehoiakim thus became a vassal to Babylon. A puppet, therefore, of the ruling forces, both of the west and the east, Jehoiakim began to permit the old pagan practices to be reestablished in the Temple. He also began to play politics with the hope of a successful revolt against Babylon, and Jeremiah now saw that the time had come for a renewal of his role as God's prophet. Therefore he suddenly appeared at the gate of the Temple and began to preach against the offerings to the Baalim and the social injustices that prevailed in the land. Jeremiah was now a man in his middle forties, older and more mature than when he had begun his prophetic mission. His speech now possessed a striking force of expression:

Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The Temple of the Lord; the Temple of the Lord; the Temple of the Lord, are these. Nay, but if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt, then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave your fathers, for ever and ever.

Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My Name and say, we are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by My Name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by My Name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

(Jeremiah 7: 2 – 11, 14 – 15)

Now the effect of these words upon the people was galvanic. Instead of taking to heart his words for their salvation, both material and spiritual, a throng of people led by priests and prophets seized him. A riot started in the temple area that subsided only when Jehoiakim and his courtiers hurried to the new gateway of the temple and took seats therein, for this was the usual court of justice at this period. A trial began, and the spokesman for the priests demanded Jeremiah's death on the ground that he had inveighed against God's Holy Temple. As a defense, Jeremiah, with the courage which had been given him by complete faith in the Lord, arose to speak before the judging princes and the people who were gathered in the gateway, and he exclaimed, with power and assurance:

The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words you have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and hearken to the voice of the Lord your God. And the Lord will repent him the evil that He hath pronounced against you. But as for me, behold, I am in your hands; do with me as is good and right in your eyes. Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof. For of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears. (Jeremiah 26: 12 – 15)

Some of the princes and the people were in accord with Jeremiah's appeal, one among those of the palace being Ahikam ben Shahan; that is, the son of the revered and learned scribe Shaphan ben Azaliah, who was one of the writers of the Book of Deuteronomy and a staunch supporter, therefore, of Jeremiah's great sermons. It was he who in fact, read the Book of Deuteronomy to King Josiah, and who with Ahikam went to the prophetess Huldah for her interpretation; and it was he who recalled to the people, the priests and the false prophets at the trial, that Micah, the prophet, had, as I have shown previously, prophesied the destruction of the Temple and no harm had been done him. Ahikam ben Shaphan and Achbor ben Micaiah, and some other elders of the palace associated with the Reform of Josiah, won the day for Jeremiah, and he was freed.

Yet King Jehoiakim took revenge on another prophet, Uriah ben Shemaiah, of Kirjath Jearim who, like Jeremiah, predicted disaster would overtake the city unless the people repented. The priests and false prophets determined to make an example of him, since Jeremiah had been freed at a public trial. And inasmuch as he had been made aware of the temper of the king and the priesthood, he fled to Egypt to escape their wrath. The king therefore had him tracked down in Egypt, and he was taken alive back to Jehoiakim, where he was killed with the sword in the king's presence.

A precedent, however, had been established by Jeremiah, whereby prophecies against the Temple because of iniquities wrought therein were not punishable by death in public trial.

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SERMON 46

Received: July 22, 1960.

JEREMIAH'S CONCEPTION OF A MORAL WORLD.

I am here, Jesus.

Jeremiah and all interested in preserving the purified rituals of Jehovah and the atmosphere of better ethical conduct among the people were bitter as they saw Jehoiakim seek to do away with the great reforms of his father, Josiah. Imbued with his spirit of trust in the Father, as I have pointed out in previous sermons on this prophet, Jeremiah feared not the hostility of the king and spoke out against him with daring, declaring that Jehoiakim would die like a dog, and without burial:

Did not thy father eat and drink, and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is this not to know Me? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thy heart are on nothing but covetousness, and unlawful gain and on shedding innocent blood, and on doing oppression, and violence. Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, King of Judah; they shall not lament him. . . .He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. (Jeremiah 22: 15 - 19)

Now I wish to explain that Jeremiah thought the destruction of Jerusalem imminent, for with Necho's defeat by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians could come up to attack Jerusalem without an Egyptian army on any of its flanks. But no direct attack developed, for the reason that no Hebrew troops had been sent to fight with Egypt against the Babylonians, for such a policy could not be successful in a land whose king had been slain by an Egyptian pharaoh. However, Jeremiah was convinced that, despite the delays and postponements, the day of reckoning had to dawn in the fullness of God's time. Jehoiakim died in 597 BC, or about the time the first investment of Jerusalem was begun. He died at the early age of 36, certainly unsung and unwept by the vast majority of the people, and the others, the high priests and the false prophets, as well as some of the aristocrats, were far too practical and indifferent to shed tears over him. That part of Jeremiah's prophesy concerning him was correct, but the fact is that he just did manage to die in time to be buried with his royal ancestors.

Jeremiah thought of God as the shaper of people and events, to be molded and redone as circumstances required. Through his contact with the spirit world, he was told to "go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words." (Jeremiah 18: 2) He did so, and beheld the artisan laboring at a jar-making device, so-called the potter's wheel, in a stall at the Jerusalem market place. He saw the emergence of beautifully shaped vessels, but sometimes

the jar might be marred in the process. However, the potter would remake the jar, more beautiful than ever, from the same clay.

Then the sermon came to Jeremiah from God: “O House of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in My hand, O house of Israel.” (Jeremiah: 18 - 6).

Thus God could pluck up or destroy a kingdom or nation, if evil, but if it repented of its evil, God could undo the work of destruction, and repair and rebuild. In short, God's work of rebuilding and constructing of nations as of individuals was linked with moral purpose and deed.

In this connection, one of meanings of the passage cited in Jeremiah, 22: 15 - 16 is important and appears to have been overlooked by commentators. Here is the statement to the effect that material prosperity is not to be sought in doing the Father's Will. If a man does the Will of the Father and treats man with justice and righteousness; “Is this not to know Me?” said God, through the spiritual insight of Jeremiah. To Josiah “be well with” did not mean physical or material well-being, for Josiah died at the hands of an assassin. To be well with a person in the sight of God meant to be well with a man's soul, and the happiness of his after-life in the spirit world, regardless of his fortunes or vicissitudes on earth. Jeremiah did not express himself clearly here, even though he understood that a soul must face a bar of justice in some way after death; for as a prophet he was against making known any conception of a post-mortal world to his compatriots, for he felt that man in his mortal environment must overcome evil and do the Will of God and walk in the path of righteousness on earth. He thus made no reference to a period of soul remorse in the spirit world to atone for sin, but he has Jehoiakim eventually taken from his throne and dying before a normal span of life.

Jehoiakim, I said, reverted to the abominations of Manasseh and Amon. Jeremiah spoke in the gates of the Temple and in a place called Topheth in the valley of Hinnom, to protest against rites and offerings to pagan gods and the practices of human sacrifices to Moloch, as I have mentioned, and his sermons became increasingly effective and violent. He predicted that as Topheth was a place of slaughter, so should Jerusalem be, with the carcasses of the people serving as food for the beasts and the scavengers, and he included the houses of the kings of Jerusalem. And on one occasion, as he came up from Topheth from a sermon there and came to the Temple court, predicting destruction upon the city, Pashur,* the son of Immer the priest, and chief security officer of the Temple, hit Jeremiah in the face, and his guards put Jeremiah in the stocks of the Temple in the north gate of Benjamin, where he languished until the next morning. This was serious punishment because of the strained and unnatural position of the body and the enforced immobility, and for a man in his late forties, a menace to his health.

In addition, this punishment made a spectacle of the victim to be laughed at and mocked by the public, among whom many were hostile to Jeremiah, especially the false prophets. On being released the next day by Pashur, Jeremiah launched into a severe tirade against the Temple officer, predicting his captivity and death in Babylon.

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*Young's Concordance says: Chief governor of the house of the Lord in the days of Jeremiah - 605 BC

SERMON 47

Received: July 24, 1960.

THE BURNING IN THE PROPHET'S HEART.

I am here, Jesus.

It was from this experience that Jeremiah emerged with a closeness to God, such as he had never before undergone, wherein he felt a burning fire in his heart, which prevented him from being pressured into silence to avoid persecution. Through the direct contact of his heart with God, he realized he must continue to cry out because such was God's Will:

. . .the word of the Lord is made a reproach unto Me, and a derision, all the day.
And if I say: I will not make mention of Him; nor speak any more in His Name;
then there is in my heart a burning fire shut up within me, and I weary myself to hold it in, but I cannot. (Jeremiah 20: 8 – 9).

This burning fire in the heart of Jeremiah heralded an advance in God's closeness to man as had never before been experienced by a human being—at least, not among the Hebrew prophets, whose relationship to God could not be equaled or surpassed for knowing the Father. The Will of the Father had been made known to Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, through an inner voice, or a vision, but now it made itself felt through a commotion, a tumult in the heart as a burning fire. If an inner voice or a vision could be disregarded, the violent feelings in the heart were a reality of such proportions and of such a nature that Jeremiah knew in his soul that here was God's Presence, making itself manifest through the burning in the heart.

It was this experience of Jeremiah's that taught me, under God's Tutelage, that God could enter the human soul—and possess it. In Jeremiah, this Presence of the Father was His Will accompanied by an overwhelming sense of righteousness that battled the evil thought in his mind to keep silent in the face of evil. But it was not Jeremiah's mind that was upset—it was his heart that reacted to the Father's Presence, making his soul melancholy at the unworthy thoughts of silence in the mind. Once the determination to keep silent had been banished, the violent fire in the heart ceased to trouble the prophet and he was calm, and God's Will had not been circumvented. It remained uppermost in his mind and heart, and gave Jeremiah more courage and resolution than ever before.

Thus it was that God's Presence in Jeremiah as Will, as a fire in the heart, was a harbinger which showed me that the glow in my own heart, which I could feel from earliest childhood, was the Divine Love of the Father, the very Presence and Nature of God. And when I spoke to the fugitives at Emmaus, and revealed my presence to them, and explained, as I had many times, the availability of the Father's Love, they exclaimed, "Didst not our hearts burn . . .?" For with that burning of the heart had come to them the Divine Love, as 600 years before them had come to Jeremiah the burning heart of the Father's Will for righteousness.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 48

Received: July 25, 1960.

BARUCH AND THE PROPHET'S BOOK.

I am here, Jesus.

In the year of Egypt's defeat at Carchemish, 605 BC, when Jehoikim realized that his new master was to be Babylonia, Baruch ben Neriah became a scribe for Jeremiah. He began to write down sermons which the prophet spoke for the turning away of evil in their deportment. The next year, Jeremiah was instructed spiritually to write a scroll that would bring to the people of Judah the things which he had been given to write through his closeness to God, and this was done. For Jeremiah hears the spiritual voice as of God say: "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."(Jeremiah 20: 8 - 9)

The Book of Jeremiah was therefore the work of dictation that Baruch had begun to write. Now at this time Jeremiah had been forbidden by Temple decree from giving sermons in the Lord's House, because of the excitement which his reading of the sermons produced among the hearers there. The idea was to read the book or portions thereof on a day of atonement, when fasting was prescribed, so that the people would have a fresh reminder of Judah's sins and thus intensify the appeal to return to righteousness and worship of Jehovah. This book took a considerable period of time to write and edit, and it was not until the next year, 604 BC, that it was ready for the reading. In those days several fast days could be called during the year instead of the fixed one, Yom Kippur, of later days, and the nearest one was in winter. Scripture tells us this was the ninth month, a reckoning different from the later Hebrew Calendar .

All the people came from Judah as well as Jerusalem, as was customary with the Passover, which Josiah had instituted, and they heard the contents of Jeremiah's book read to

them by Baruch ben Neriah in the Chamber of Gemariah, one of the sons of Shaphan the Scribe, at the entry of the new gate of the Temple. The book itself was not very long, being less than one half of what it is today, inasmuch as there have been many additions, not only by Baruch himself, but by others, and it created a strong impression on all, especially the officials and elders, as well as the publicans of Jerusalem. Micah, Gemariah's son, had reported the contents of the book to the princes, (Elishama the scribe of the royal seed, Delaiah ben Shemaiah, Elnathan ben Achbor, Gemariah ben Shaphan, and Zedekiah ben Hananiah among others). They sent Jehudi ben Nethaniah to Baruch to have him read the work to the princes of Judah. The denunciations upon the people and the land, due to ritual abominations and conduct in violation of the Ten Commandments and Deuteronomy, filled these men with trepidation, and their conclusion was to tell Jehoiakim the King. They advised Baruch to hide with Jeremiah, fearful lest the wrath of Jehoiakim seek vengeance on the writer and his scribe. Jehudi read Jeremiah's book to the King, who with his penknife ferociously cut the scrolls and threw them into the fire of the brazier which was burning to keep the king comfortable that winter day. And thus, after hearing Jeremiah's words, the king burned it in wrath, despite the pleas of Elnathan and Delaiah to preserve the scroll. In fact, Jehoiakim ordered Terahmeel, one of his sons, and two officers (Seraiah ben Azriel and Shelinaiah ben Abdul), to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah, the Prophet. But these had taken refuge out of the city beyond the Mount of Olives and, as the Old Testament says, "The Lord hid them."

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SERMON 49

Received: July 29, 1960

JEREMIAH ATTACKS SOCIAL EVILS IN JUDEA.

I am here, Jesus.

But as I have pointed out, such a defeat could not deter Jeremiah from his purpose, since as he knew God was with him. So he dictated another book to Baruch. And as for Jehoiakim, Jeremiah uttered his prophecy of the king's death, and dishonor to his body, which I showed, almost, but did not come to pass. Nor did Jeremiah predict correctly that he would not be succeeded by a son, for in 597 BC, at his death, his son Jehoiakim reigned only three months. The Babylonians captured the city and took Jehoiakim prisoner, carrying him off to Babylon where he died as an old man. At this point, however, Jeremiah stopped preaching for seven years.

Shortly before Jehoiakim's death, when the Babylonians commenced their attack upon Jerusalem, a group of Rechabites, cultists who swore not to drink liquor, and who lived as nomads in tents, took refuge from the hill country of Judah, open to the devastation of Nebuchadnezzar's advancing armies, into the city of Jerusalem, where they would be safe as long as the city would resist siege. These people, in their aversion to strong drink, were thus like the Nazarites, who produced Samson, in the days of the Judges, and they were very pious in their beliefs and tenets. Jeremiah learned of their coming and brought them into the Temple, for the ban against him had been lifted, and he gave them wine to drink. But they refused, recalling the pledge which they had given. In admiration of their faith, Jeremiah lifted his silence and felt moved by the voice of God to acclaim:

Whereas the words of a man, the son of Rechab, who commanded his sons not to drink wine, are obeyed, for . . . they hearken to their father's commandment, but I your God, have spoken unto you often and again, and ye have not hearkened unto Me . . . through My servants and My prophets; therefore, saith the Lord, behold, I will bring upon Judah and Jerusalem all the evil I have pronounced against them . . . (Jeremiah 35: 14 - 17)

And in other sermons Jeremiah denounced the evil of the false prophets and the evil priests, and held controversy with a false prophet. Meanwhile, Nebuchadnezzar consolidated his power and empire, and in 600 BC invaded Syria and Palestine. All the small nations in that area recognized him as master, including Judah, and Jehoiakim raided the Temple treasury to pay tribute to him. Finally, against the advice of Jeremiah, who saw in Babylonia the hand of God for the scourge of nations:

Therefore, saith the Lord of hosts; Because ye have not heard My words, behold, I will take all the families of the north. . . . I will send unto Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon, My servant, and I will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and I will utterly destroy them . (Jeremiah 25: 8 – 9)

Jehoiakim rebelled and died soon thereafter and in short order Jerusalem was taken by the mighty empire from the north. The conquerors placed Zedekiah, an uncle, on the throne. The Babylonians looted the city, emptied the Temple treasury, took anything of value found therein and departed to Babylonia with thousands of the upper classes, as well as craftsmen and workers, and men fit to wage war, the royal house and the chief men of the land. This was the first captivity of Judah, and the end was in sight.

Jeremiah thus saw that, though delayed, his prophecies were to come true. He therefore preached vehemently and often not to rebel against the conquerors, but to remain faithful to them. Zedekiah was the brother of Jehoiakim, and was 21 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar had been advised by his spies that Zedekiah had not been active in fomenting revolt against him, as the sons of Jehoiakim had been, and thus chose him to rule under his suzerainty.

Now Zedekiah (he had been named Mattaniah by his father) was pressed both by the pro-Egyptian party of the priests and prophets, and by those who, like Jeremiah, favored peace with Babylonia. In fact, the king had great respect for Jeremiah, whose writings he was familiar with and whom he had heard preaching, and he was impressed by the fact that his prophecies of Jerusalem's fall to Babylonia had been fulfilled. But Jerusalem had not been destroyed, and there were false prophets who pointed out and affirmed that in a short time the exiles from Babylonia would return. For this to happen, of course, there would have to be waged a successful war of rebellion against Babylonia. And Jeremiah knew from God that such a revolt could only end in the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. To emphasize and constantly remind the people that they must be subservient to Babylonia, Jeremiah used to wear a wooden yoke on his neck.

The last dozen or more chapters in the Book of Jeremiah pertain to the reign of Zedekiah, the anguish suffered by Jeremiah because of his certainty of Jerusalem's destruction due to hesitation, the doubts and the inability of the king to understand Jeremiah's message, even though he respected and feared the prophet who spoke in the Name of the Lord. Here, too, is found the hope, the optimism, that a remnant would abide, who, chastened by the experience of exile and loss of homeland, would conform to the Commandments of God with a New Heart to know God and be His children.

The Scriptures relate that one of the popular false prophets of the day, Hananiah ben Azzur, from Gideon, came to Jerusalem to speak to the priests and the people in the Temple. This took place in the fourth year of Zedekiah, 593 BC, in the fifth month, that is in the summer. Hananiah declared that God had broken the yoke of Babylonia and in two years would bring back the treasures of the Temple, as well as the royal house and all the captives. And when Jeremiah answered him that the history of prophecy was a declaration against wars, and evil behavior, and one that stood for peace, then Hananiah took the wooden yoke from Jeremiah's neck and broke it. Jeremiah went to a blacksmith's shop, and had an iron one made, put it around his neck and, when next he saw Hananiah in the Temple, retorted:

For thus saith the Lord; Thou hast broken the bars of wood;
But thou shalt make in their stead bars of iron.
For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel;
I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that
they may serve Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.
Hear now, Hananiah; the Lord hath sent thee not;
But thou makest this people to trust in a lie.
(Jeremiah 28: 13 - 15).

And he predicted Hananiah's death that same year for preaching rebellion against God, Hananiah died two months later. This report is true, as Hananiah had not the faith and the inward conviction of what he was saying. He was a party man, a politician, and he spoke as he did because it was profitable, though he did not realize he was mainly a tool in the hands of the pro-Egyptian party throughout the land. He was struck with terror by Jeremiah's words, because Jeremiah was absolutely sincere and he spoke from the heart; therefore his words clung to Hananiah's brain, and they assumed the shape of truth, and this instance of the power of suggestion, here in death, as it could be for healing, is one which shows the might of the Words

of God. For they are like fire and burn in the heart, and bring unquenchable courage, as they can strike terror into those who know they have worked iniquity. God did not want Hananiah's death, but his repentance. Yet the burden of his conscience brought him death, as it did in centuries to come, to Judas, my companion.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 50

Received: August 5, 1960.

JEREMIAH'S LETTER FOR THE JUDEANS IN BABYLONIA.

I am here, Jesus.

For nine long years, Hezekiah adhered waveringly to Jeremiah's policy of peace and vassalage to Babylonia. So great was Jeremiah's influence at one time that the king sent two of his officers, Elasah, the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah, the son of Hilkiah (the priest) with a letter to Nebuchadnezzar, written by Jeremiah for the captives in Babylonia. This letter was designed to quiet the people there, to give them confidence that the Lord was with them, and would redeem them in time to come (70 years), and for them to put aside thoughts of revolt that were being spread about by false prophets and agitators. The letter was also designed to have Nebuchadnezzar treat the Judeans there with more kindness, as a people that would live in peace and help in the prosperity of the land as obedient inhabitants of Babylonia. In fact, here are Jeremiah's great words of wisdom and love for his people:

Build ye houses, and dwell in them,
And plant your gardens and eat the fruit thereof;
Take your wives, and beget sons and daughters;
And take wives for your sons and give your daughters
To husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters
And multiply you there and be not diminished.
And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you
To be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it;
For in the peace thereof shall you have peace.
(Jeremiah 29: 5 - 7)

The astonishing part of this letter, from the standpoint of the times and age in which it was written, is that Jeremiah told the people to pray to the God of Israel on Babylonian soil. To you (people of today) of a deeper understanding of the universality of God, this may be taken for granted, but in those days people worshipped the god of the land. Thus did Assyrians who were brought to Samaria in the days of Assur-barn-pal (Jewish Encyclopedia – King Ashurnazirpal) relinquished their gods to worship Jehovah, the God of the land. But the Lord had been transported, so to speak, by the Hebrews, from Sinai to Canaan, and at this point to Babylonia, where a great center of learning developed as the Babylonian Talmud, the better of the two Talmuds in existence today.

Another important fact about this letter was the emphasis, not on political success, but on moral values; the worshipping of God with justice and adherence to His Laws. Regardless of who controlled the land of Israel, it was paramount that the people devote themselves to God and to His Will. A land, a nation, a Temple, sacrifices were not important in God's view of the nation and the individual. What was important was faith in God as a people, and they would not be forsaken by God. And, in fact, the people learned religious meetings and prayers rather than sacrifice and achieved a new outlook towards God's Commandments.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 51

Received: August 7, 1960.

JEREMIAH AND THE NEW COVENANT.

I am here, Jesus.

Thus Jeremiah felt that a new covenant between these captives in Babylonia was in the making, wherein this new insight in God would achieve for them a “new heart.” This new heart was for each individual as a human being, not as a mere member of a collectivity, responsible for his own actions and entering into a personal relationship with God. For, said Jeremiah;

In those days, they shall say no more;
The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
And the children's teeth are set on edge.
But every one shall die for his own iniquity;
Every man that eateth the sour grapes, His teeth shall be set on edge.

(Jeremiah 31: 29 – 30)

This new heart in man with individual responsibility as the keynote was to come as understanding of his failure to heed God's Laws, and his desire to approach God once more. This repentance of evil would be accomplished by a return from Babylon to the homeland of Judah: "To the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it," the Lord told Jeremiah through his insight. The Lord would heal the wounds of Israel, and take the people once more under His Protection. Jeremiah, in short, became imbued with knowledge that the Babylonian captives would retain their faith in God and purify their ways and their hearts in returning to Him, so that God could once more declare His Love for His people:

Thus saith the Lord:

The people that were left of the sword
Have found grace in the wilderness;
Yea, Israel, when I go to cause him to rest.
From afar the Lord appeared unto me, saying
Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love;
Therefore with affection have I drawn thee.
Again will I build thee, and thou shalt be built
For there shall be a day,
That the nobleman shall call upon the Mount Ephraim;
Arise ye, and let us go to Zion, unto the Lord our God.
(Jeremiah 31: 2 – 6)

The New Covenant of the heart which God was to make with Israel was one which would not need instruction, but would be in the soul of each man, so that knowing the Lord would be in the nature of man. This would be the consequences of man's return to God and God's Love for His children:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord,
That I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel,
And the House of Judah
I will put My Law in their inward parts,
And in their hearts will I write it.
And I will be their God and they shall be My people.
And they shall teach no more, every man his neighbor,
And every man, his brother, saying:
Know the Lord. For they shall all know Me,
From the least of them unto the greatest of them,
Saith the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity,
And their sin will I remember no more.
(Jeremiah: 31: 31, 33 – 34)

Now if you read these words carefully you will see the meaning is that, with the New Covenant of the heart, there would be no more sinning, for to know God means to do His Will and obey His Commandments. Here in Jeremiah's words is the Christian doctrine of Grace, for I taught, and Paul taught after me, that he whose soul is filled with God's Love is not tempted to sin. Jeremiah thus, through God, predicted a time when the Hebrew people would not sin because the Nature of God would be in their souls. He did not say that the Nature of God was Divine Love, for he had no knowledge of the Divine Love, but he had a tremendous intuition, one might say, a perceiving as through a veil, that this was so, for Jeremiah's chapters 30 and 31 are filled with an inward emotion as he pours forth in lyrical terms the Love and Mercy that God has for His people whose wounds He will bind up and whom He will cause to be brought back into their homeland, with gladness and rejoicing. For saith the Lord: “. . . I am become a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.” (Jeremiah, Chap. 31, verse 9)

The New Covenant between Judah and God was no longer to be the outside sign of the old covenant, circumcision, but was now the personal relationship between God and man. My followers used this to emphasize “circumcision of the heart,” eliminating the impurities of the heart, as the old covenant provided for removing the impurities of the foreskin. Jeremiah expected this New Covenant to take place with the return of the captives to Jerusalem, which he thought would be in about seventy years, or about 525 BC, broadly speaking, but then he was unable to see the period of about five hundred and fifty years covering the time of the Second Temple until my appearance in Palestine.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 52

Received: August 12, 1960.

JEREMIAH'S TRIBULATIONS AS AN ANTI-WAR PROPHET.

I am here, Jesus.

Meanwhile, from 597 BC Zedekiah held to his wavering course of vassalage to Babylonia, despite the opposition of many of his advisers and princes of the royal house of Judah, but when Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt entered Palestine to wage war on Babylonia, he was persuaded to join him. In the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, then lifted it temporarily to meet Hophra. The people rejoiced, thinking that danger had been averted, and that they would be free, but Jeremiah, with his unwavering trust in the Babylonians as the scourge of God, declared they would return and conquer Jerusalem. (Jeremiah 37: 5 – 9)

As the Babylonians broke camp to meet the Egyptian army, Jeremiah decided to leave Jerusalem, to receive his land in Anathoth that, as I have said elsewhere, he had bought from his nephew. He was arrested at the gate of Benjamin as a deserter to the enemy. Though Jeremiah protested his innocence, he was brought before certain of the princes who sustained the charges, had him flogged and placed him in a dungeon beneath the house of Jonathan, the Scribe. He was held there for many days, while the Babylonians, who had in the meanwhile driven off the Egyptians, returned, as Jeremiah had predicted, and began to besiege the city in earnest.

Zedekiah, realizing that Jeremiah had prophesied accurately, decided to ask him what might be the result of the siege, and had him brought from the dungeons to ask him alone, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Jeremiah could only repeat his admonitions of submission to Babylonia and pointed out his prophecies were of God, and that he had not sinned in any way to have been condemned to prison. He pleaded with the king not to send him back to that terrible dungeon, or he would die there. The king had mercy on the old man, and had him transferred to a more tolerable prison, called the court of the guards, with provision of a loaf of bread daily as long as food was available in Jerusalem.

I do not care to linger on the vicissitudes and hardships which Jeremiah endured during this time, nor before, for it is a subject that brings forth only sorrow, nor is Jeremiah himself anxious that these things be dwelt upon; they merely show that, like other prophets before him, and afterwards, spokesmen for God had to pay for their mission to the people by those who found God's Will not to their liking and against their earth plane desires. These princes were of the military caste who also felt that God would not permit His holy city to be taken.

Briefly, Jeremiah was accused again of treason for preaching submission to Babylonia, and, when Zedekiah threw up his hands, saying, "Behold, he is in your hand; the king can do nothing against you," they had Jeremiah lowered with cords into a pit, or grave, that was in the court of the guard, and the prophet sank into the mire of this grave, left to die of starvation and exposure. He was rescued by a Negro, Eben-Melech, of Ethiopia, an officer in the king's house, who protested to the king that "evil" had been done unto him. Zedekiah, who could not control his cousins or others in his family who were with him, neither had any wish to be responsible for Jeremiah's death, and he ordered Eben-Melech to take thirty men and rescue him. The Book of Jeremiah relates the Negro's kindness to the prophet, providing him with worn rags and cloths to be placed under his armpits so that the ropes would not tear his skin in the process of pulling him up.

Yet Zedekiah was afraid of the princes surrounding him. I have spoken with Zedekiah and he tells me that he was in fear of their assassinating him if he yielded to the Babylonians. He had no choice but to continue in the defense of Jerusalem and depend upon the mercy of Nebuchadnezzar, and he says that, considering the fact that the siege lasted two years and cost the conqueror many thousands of his soldiers' lives, he got off with not too much severity. Though his eyes were put out with irons and he was sent in chains to prison, yet he was allowed to live and he did not die a violent death. I have spoken to Nebuchadnezzar about Zedekiah and the siege of Jerusalem and he tells me that he realized all along that the main enemy was Egypt, and that Judah's revolt was not a serious attempt on his kingdom, being a tiny outpost, but that he felt burning of the city and deportation of most of the people to Babylonia would act as a deterrent to other possible rebellions. At the same time he expressed astonishment at the tenacity and fanaticism shown by the Judean soldiers.

The city was taken on the 9th of Ab, 586 BC, the city burned, the Temple destroyed, and the fleeing king and the nobles were captured in the plains of Jericho and brought to Nebuchadnezzar's headquarters at Riblah where the monarch executed judgment upon the rebels. Zedekiah's sons were slain before his eyes, and the nobility as well. Most of the survivors of the siege, and the dwellers of the countryside, were marched to Babylon as captives to be treated as enslaved people. Only the very poor of the rural areas were permitted to remain on the farms and vineyards so that the land would not become a desert.

Jeremiah was taken from his prison in the court of the guard by Nebuzaradan, captain of the Babylonian guard, to Ramah, with many other captives, but was released by orders of Nebuchadnezzar, and given a choice of going with the people or remaining in Judah. Jeremiah chose to stay behind, and he was told to dwell with Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, who had saved the prophet's life at his trial before the princes. Gedaliah, descendant of the Royal House of David, had been appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar because he had shared Jeremiah's view that it was better to submit than to fight Babylonia. On Rosh Hashanah of that year, a few princes who had escaped to Moab came back to Mizpah and, at the feast of this holy day, killed Gedaliah with the sword, the foremost one being Ismael, the son of Nethaniah, of the royal house, and rabidly pro-Egyptian. For Gedaliah, a good man, could not believe the warning of Johanan, son of Kareah, that Ismael or anyone else would come to kill him at table. The people were profoundly heartbroken at the news of Gedaliah's death, and they instituted the holiday of the Fast of Gedaliah, the 3rd of Tishri, the day after Rosh Hoshanah.

In the massacres and confusion that followed Gedaliah's death, the few remnants abiding in Judah fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians, and they took Jeremiah and Baruch with them, despite their advice and warnings. And they went down to Egypt, in Taphanhes, and it was there that Jeremiah ended his days, through violence, still preaching against Egypt and the disaster to follow those that remained there.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 53

Received: August 1, 1961.

JEREMIAH'S IDEAL OF DEMOCRACY.

I am here, Jesus.

There remains to tell of Jeremiah's democratic ideals that amaze one even to this day. For the prophet's most important concept, aside from the moral and religious standpoint, is one that

enters into the framework of the broader aspects of human living, the ideal of democracy and equality.

For at the time (588-587 BC) when Hophra entered Palestine to wage war against Babylonia and when Zedekiah joined Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar, as I said, turned away from his siege of Jerusalem to meet the Egyptian host. During the siege, when the situation looked dark, the Judean slave owners went into the Temple with the sacrifice of a lamb. These slave owners were the princes of the royal house and other aristocratic and wealthy people of the area. They released the Hebrew slaves as an appeasement to a God who demanded justice for His people, regardless of their economic status, in order to enlist God's Help in saving His capital from destruction.

But as soon as Nebuchadnezzar raised the siege to meet the Egyptians, Zedekiah and his ruling class saw no reason why they should adhere to the covenant thus agreed to in the holy precincts of the Temple, and forced the bondsmen and women back into slavery through armed might and violence. This was moral degradation to an extraordinary degree, inasmuch as the liberation had been proclaimed as a religious measure, as I said, to obtain God's Aid by an act of justice. But as soon as these rulers saw the hand of the Lord, apparently stretched out to protect them, they repudiated the terms on which the raising of the siege had been in their minds granted. In short, they went back on their bargain with the Lord, and committed a breach of faith with Him. Such a contemptible procedure merited a stinging denunciation and Jeremiah spoke out, proclaiming the equality of human beings and democracy for all:

Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel. . . ye were now turned, and had done that which is right in Mine eyes, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbor; and ye had made a covenant before Me In the house wherein My Name is called; and ye turned and profaned My Name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom ye had let go at their pleasure, to return; and ye brought them into subjection. Therefore thus saith the Lord: Ye have not hearkened unto Me, to proclaim liberty, every man to his brother, and every man to his neighbor; behold I proclaim for you a liberty, saith the Lord, unto the sword, unto the pestilence and unto the famine; and I will make you a horror unto all the kingdoms of the earth. (Jeremiah 34: 13 – 17)

These sermons have only touched on some of the highlights and episodes in the stormy prophetic career of Jeremiah ben Hilkiah. In the forty years or more of his preaching, and working for the elevation of the morals and ethics of his people, there were many situations he faced which were similar to the ones which confronted me these many centuries later. We both predicted destruction of the Temple and were brought to trial or, at least a hearing in my case, for our statements. We were both beaten while under arrest, and we both lost our mortal lives due to the violence of the opposition group—in both cases, the aristocratic and priestly party. In both cases we favored peace and submission to the overlord nations of our times, the Babylonians and the Romans, respectively. Jeremiah, of course, witnessed the last stand against Nebuchadnezzar, in 586 BC, and beheld the destruction of the Temple and the razing of the city walls, and it is possible that I would have seen the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus in 70 AD, had I not been cut down two generations earlier. And as Jeremiah first predicted the coming of the New

Covenant, so was I the first to bring that Covenant—the New Birth with the availability of the Father's Love—to fulfillment, and the opening up of the Celestial Heavens to whosoever should seek and possess this Love through earnest prayer to God.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 54

Received: August 1, 1961.

HABAKKUK—SINGER AND STUDENT OF THE PSALMS.

I am here, Jesus.

You have seen that, whenever there arose a threat against Israel or Judah from a foreign military power, a prophet would come forth to proclaim a message from the Lord. In showing you the troubles of Jeremiah, I have spent some time pointing out the indecision of the kings and how they were subject to the great nations, Egypt and Babylonia, as well as to the mean spirit of the nobles who constantly intrigued and pressured, always aware of their own interests and oblivious to the needs and welfare of the nation.

In the terrible period after the death of King Josiah and the defeat of the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish by Nebuchadrezzar,* son of Nabopolassar, the Chaldean monarch, who with the Medes had destroyed Assyrian power and conquered Nineveh, there followed the Chaldean, that is to say, the Babylonian advance against Judah, because King Jehoiakim rebelled. The times for Judah were sore and perplexed, and there was wickedness in high places, and fear of the barbarians, and a faithful worshipper of Jehovah could well ask himself why iniquity and evil were so rampant and seemingly triumphant; and why Jehovah remained impassive, not stretching forth His hand for the protection of the righteous.

And thus I wish to speak of the prophet Habakkuk ben Jeshua, the Levite, one of the singers of the Temple choir, from the time of Josiah, and who, after the touching death of this good king, and the menace of Babylonia following the collapse of Egypt on its eastern borders, began to write about the time of the Carchemish disaster: a mature man nearing his fortieth year, a singer and student of the Psalms, and of religious songs of other lands. And he called himself a flower in the garden, comparing the Temple to a garden because it was fruitful and he was a flower that lives because it receives the Father's Love in the form of sunlight and showers and has its roots in the House of God.

Being thus a Temple singer and having knowledge of foreign hymns to deities, he took the name for his prophetic book as a sort of preface, a title derived from the Egyptian Wisdom Book. In the teaching of Amen-em-ope, where it is written:

He is like a tree that groweth in a plot;
It groweth green, and the fruit thereof increases;
It standeth in the presence of its Lord;
Its fruits are sweet, its shade is pleasant,
And it findeth its end in the garden. (Jeremiah 12: 2)

Jeremiah, who, of course, was familiar with this Egyptian Wisdom Book, also wrote along very similar lines and Habakkuk also heard these words while listening to Jeremiah. But Habakkuk hid his identity because he wished to refer to the iniquity of priests and false prophets which he saw close by, and as he associated with the Temple priests, he did not wish to be thrown out of the service as a hostile critic.

Habakkuk, a native of Jerusalem and not of princely origin, was concerned with a twofold problem: the triumph of the great and cruel power, Babylonia, as the coming successor to that other evil nation, Egypt, while a Hebrew king, weak and equivocal, Jehoiakim, sat on his throne and was indifferent to the evils that were rampant in his land. Thus, when Habakkuk complained about evil and tyranny, he spoke openly about foreign evils, but also in his mind were the domestic evils he had not openly denounced for fear of jeopardizing his own position.

Thus Habakkuk developed a prophecy which called upon God to answer his misgivings: Why was it that a Pure and Holy God, Who could not look upon iniquity, set a human being, the prophet, to observe nothing but evils and violence and aggression? Hence Habakkuk was not merely content to obtain a message from God for His people, but he queried and complained, and questioned God concerning his complexities and doubts, as did Job centuries later in his questionings of God on the problem of evil in human existence.

Habakkuk complains: "Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me . . . Therefore the law is slacked and judgment doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth" . . . God answers that the Chaldeans, will arise, cruel and swift, terrible and dreadful, to conquer and possess.

Habakkuk recognizes that these conquerors will come as a corrective to the evils of the land, yet, since they are more evil than the Hebrews, then God is using an instrument for punishment more wicked than those He is punishing. God, who cannot see evil, looks upon those that deal treacherously and destroys men more righteous than they.

Habakkuk goes to his watchtower, to meditate in silence and await God's answer to his queries. And the Lord answers him: "Write the vision and make it plain upon writing tables, that he may run that readeth it." (so plain that anyone running by in haste can still read it).

For the vision is yet for an appointed time,
but at the end it shall speak, and not lie;
Though it tarry, wait for it;
Because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Behold his soul which is puffed up is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faithfulness.
(Habakkuk 2: 2 - 4)

This is the first part of the answer, and I wish to comment upon it and clarify it in the light of our spiritual knowledge before taking up the second part.

First, the New Testament translation is usually given as “the just shall live by his faith” (Emunah) which is different from what the Old Testament prophets meant to convey. He did not mean actually that the good man lives by his faith in God, and has faith that God will protect the good man from evil, for this is not always so, for the good man may be destroyed by diseases, violence and troubles over which he has no control, and though he is helped by the Lord's agents when he calls upon Him in earnest prayer, material vicissitudes may claim a man's life or fortune as material law dictates.

But Habakkuk meant that the just man lives by continuing to do what is right and living an upright life regardless of the evil around him, and being loyal to moral ideas because he knows his soul comes from God.

Now when Habakkuk spoke about the vision that was yet for an appointed time, it meant that the soul of the good man, while still encased in the flesh, was destined at some time to enter the spirit world, and that in that world the good soul would then reap the rewards of its good life and live in one of the beautiful spheres of Heaven, with light, happiness and an eventual abode in Paradise, the highest Spiritual Heaven of the Hebrews.

Habakkuk thus meant living a moral and ethical life, and even if that life in the flesh were extinguished by evil in the material world, the soul, untouched by that evil, would continue to live happily in the spirit world. Commentators of Habakkuk, whether Jew or Christian, have not been able to discover the prophet's true meaning, and I now want to tell you what he really meant by those words, “The just shall live by his faith,” words that are cherished so much by Christian churchmen, especially Protestant sects, yet which they have not really understood at all.

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* Nebuchadnezzar or more correctly Nebuchadrezzar, the name of three kings of Babylon mentioned in the Bible, of whom the most famous was Nebuchadrezzar II, the son of Nabopolassar. After the death of his father, 604 BC, he reigned until 561 BC, destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC, and exiled over 4,000 Jews, besieged Tyre for 13 years; conquered Egypt in 572 BC His restoration of Babylon made it one of the wonders of the world. It was famous for its hanging gardens.

SERMON 55

Received: August 1, 1961.

JESUS EXPLAINS THE TRUE MEANING OF HABAKKUK'S PROPHECIES.

I am here, Jesus.

Now the second part of the answer deals with the fate of the wicked. This answer is fairly long and covers verses 5 to 20 in Chapter 2; that is, to the end of the chapter. It states very clearly that wickedness creates its own destruction, and where goodness forgives, evil brings on retribution and vengeance, or, as I say, in spiritual language, evil creates evil conditions, and the man of evil is finally devoured by his own evil and the evil it has brought into existence against him.

This iniquity eventually destroys an evil man in his prosperity, bringing on illnesses and diseases of mind and body, and if, by some material law, this does not happen, the evil man pays for his sins and iniquities when he becomes a spirit and his soul undergoes the tortures of the spiritual Law of Compensation. This is the answer to the problem of evil and I intend to say more about this when I write you a sermon on the Book of Job.

Habakkuk wrote as he did because he saw that God ruled the world through moral law, which makes itself final in the spirit world, but which is also operative upon the soul in the world of the flesh. God was not to be worshipped as a deity of war or as a founder of food or health, as the pagans worshipped their gods of wrath, of agriculture or of fertility—this was religion on a low primitive level. Were Jews to worship Jehovah simply as a protector in battle against mighty nations? Were Jews to forsake God because His people were like bits of wood tossed about on the ocean of the power politics of the day? A Hebrew nation conscious of its justice and righteousness could, and would, attract great spiritual forces, manifesting themselves in quiet confidence, resolution and courage, as well as worldly assistance, to preserve the integrity of the country and the people. But the country filled with individual, as well as corporate, hatred, drunkenness, violence, deceit, spilling of blood, covetousness, and worship of the molten image, could not find help from a God whose eyes were averted from such abominations, and its meager material strength would falter irrevocably before superior might, and go down to defeat and destruction.

Habakkuk stressed that righteousness in a man, as in a nation, instilled courage born of trust in God's Help, and pointed out that faith in God meant moral and ethical conduct, by which man and nation had to live, as the way to meet and overcome the assaults of the powerful wicked nations of the times. Habakkuk helped to provide his people with a greater trust in the Lord who, at the appointed time in the future, would crush the enemies of the Hebrews, and give them their God-given place and peace. This could be accomplished on earth, but unquestionably was to be fulfilled in the land of the souls. And because Habakkuk knew that the answer to safety, life and happiness on earth, as well as in the spirit world, rested with faith in God and righteous and just

conduct, he saw the day when God would eventually triumph and the earth would be “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Habakkuk 2: 14)

Habukkuk fled from Jerusalem in 586 and stayed in Egypt until the Chaldeans withdrew. He did not survive by more than five years the destruction of the Holy City, to which he returned; and he died 580-581 in his early sixties, in a place called Kellah, 18 miles to the southwest of Jerusalem.

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SERMON 56

Received: April 15, 1963.

EZEKIEL DESCRIBES HIS EXILE TO BABYLONIA.

I am here, Jesus.

Ezekiel ben Buzi was born about 615 BC, as Flavius Josephus, the historian, tells us in his book, *Antiquities of the Jews*, (Book 10, Chap. 6, verse 3), and this is about right, as Ezekiel himself agrees to this approximate date of his birth. For he remembers that when he began to write prophecies in 593 BC he was about twenty-two years old. His father, Buzi, was a wealthy priest connected with the Temple in Jerusalem with holdings and estates outside the city, and Ezekiel was born in the hill side country some 15 miles north of Jerusalem, in the neighborhood of Ophrah. He was like Jeremiah in this respect, for he was a keen observer. His writings show a love for his native surroundings in a way that surprises us in a prophet who became known for measurement and precision, so characteristic of man's intellect rather than love of nature and rural environment. Hence his picture of Babylonia as a great eagle, which carries off the top of the cedar (17: 3) of Judah, as a lioness, mother of two whelps (19: 2) or as a vine planted by many waters (19: 10) or as a branch burned at the ends (15: 4). In the same way, in his early work, Ezekiel could not help but think of the northern Kingdom, Israel, lost to the Hebrews, and maintains discreet silence about the nearby local shrine of Beth-el denounced in the reforms of Josiah. We know, of course, that the area, headed by Jericho, had once formed part of the Kingdom of Israel, and thus Ezekiel was interested in the land, and also the people, especially the prophet, Hosea, who belonged to that region.

His affinity to Hosea, which we find later in his book of prophecies, became even greater when his father, Buzi, brought him on several occasions to visit the Temple in Jerusalem, and there he saw evidences of Astarte (Ashtoreth, the fertility goddess), Tammuz, nature myth, and sun worship. Judah had indeed played the harlot, and Ezekiel voiced a tremendous protest. His

imagery, if inspired by Hosea, goes far beyond it in coarseness and earthliness. This explains his hatred for those practices and likens it to the filth it represented. From this Ezekiel realized that the preceding prophets of Israel and Judah were right in their conviction that an idol-worshipping Temple and its city were doomed to devastation, and on various trips to Jerusalem when in his teens, he heard Jeremiah speak and became familiar with his prophetic work. Thus Ezekiel knew in his heart that the time was rapidly approaching when Jerusalem would be destroyed, and when it was, he felt that prophecy was fulfilled. The terrible event convinced him beyond any doubt that the prophets were really the spokesmen for God and in time he experienced an urge to declare the things that he felt God wanted to say to His people through him.

The Babylonian master, Nebuchadnezzar, singled him out as a non-conformist Zadokite Temple priest, to depart with his wife to the land of Babylonia, part of several thousand craftsmen workers and soldiers of all kinds, young people of spirit who had dared to rebel. The prisoners started out on a journey of about 700 miles over Arabian desert. It was made on foot, with scanty supplies of food and water, and there were those who died and were buried along the route. The passing of the centuries has stilled the anguish of children and parents torn from each other knowing they would never see each other again. Ezekiel heard them and cried because he too felt the anguish of separation from his parents, while his wife wept bitterly for hers.

In 597 BC therefore, Ezekiel and his wife found themselves near Babylon, along the Chebar River, a long and wide canal which branched off from the Euphrates north of the city of Nippur and returned to it some distance below the city, which it passed through on the way southward. The land was low, fertile and irrigated.

The Hebrews, accustomed as they were to the rocky soil of Judah, were amazed at the greenery and easy conditions for agricultural pursuits, and the exiles took this to mean that God, though He had taken them away from the land He had given them, had not entirely forsaken them. The Hebrews thus settled down to craftsmanship, as they had in Jerusalem, and also to agriculture, and as the Babylonians were not as cruel to them as the Egyptians had been, and encouraged by Jeremiah's pastoral letter, they developed thriving communities and continued to hold to that Jehovah who, even in adversity and travail, was showing His Great Love and Mercy to His children.

For this reason, Ezekiel, as a Temple priest, came to be looked upon as a religious representative of the exiles. And if he could not earn a living as a craftsman in business or as a farmer, his needs were provided for to a certain degree by what you might call his parishioners, who looked to him for spiritual comfort and guidance.

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SERMON 57

Received: April 15, 1963.

EZEKIEL'S PROPHETIC CALL.

I am here, Jesus.

It took Ezekiel many years to recover from the displacement to the new land and to fit into the pattern of living as it affected the exiled Hebrews. First of all, in order to accept the totally new conditions and carry on, Ezekiel had to persuade himself that the great misfortune suffered by the Hebrews had been really deserved and brought about by God, and in studying the old prophets of Israel and Judah, he became thoroughly convinced of its truth—so much so, that in his sermons which followed when he became a prophet, he elaborated vehemently on all the misdeeds and the erring conduct which his people had been accused of by his predecessors, and he strove to persuade his hearers that such indeed were the facts.

It occurred to Ezekiel, to be sure, that he had to find a way to bring Jehovah from His Temple in Jerusalem (which before 586 BC was still standing) to Babylonia, but since he was a priest and knew thoroughly the Hebrew scrolls, he was very much aware that Jehovah had led the people from the Sinai Peninsula to the Promised Land of Israel as a pillar of fire and cloud. And so he knew that Jehovah could leave His Sanctuary and come to Babylonia. From the prophet Isaiah, Ezekiel, in the sixth chapter of his book, was able to obtain the elements for his first vision of God—not really a vision, as many writers of Ezekiel suppose, but an adaptation from the writings of the preceding prophet. And just as Jeremiah had found inspiration in this chapter, converting the Seraph's live coal into the hand of God, so Ezekiel used the phrase “The hand of the Lord” to be upon him whenever he felt impelled to voice a prophecy. Ezekiel went beyond Isaiah in elaborating his so-called vision, complete with opulent and oriental descriptions, but he was not a mystic or a visionary in the sense that he has been generally considered.

Ezekiel felt that God wanted a prophet through whom to instruct His children in Babylonia, as Jeremiah had been His prophet in Jerusalem, and, as the Lord, “Put forth His Hand, and touched Jeremiah's mouth, saying; Behold, I put words into thy mouth,” (Jeremiah 1: 9) so did the Lord give Ezekiel a book to eat, a scroll on both sides, and Ezekiel wrote:

So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that roll.
And He said unto me, “Son of man, cause thy belly to eat
and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee.
Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for
sweetness. (Ezekiel 3: 2 – 3)

As Jeremiah had said previously, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.”(Jeremiah 15: 16) Ezekiel wrote other things that Jeremiah had said first, such as not being afraid, and not being listened to by the people. With this opening “vision,” however, Ezekiel now felt he could voice God's wishes in Babylonia, and even considered that God had come to this land to preside over the spiritual

fortunes of His people. Where in Babylonia? Ezekiel did not say, but it wasn't necessary. To the prophet, God was the King of the Universe and could abide wherever He wished.

A word about the term “Son of Man” which I have just quoted. This was applied to me in various places in the New Testament as having a special meaning connected with my Messiahship. Actually, the term, as Ezekiel conceived it to be, meant Son of Adam, but not merely man as a living being, but as man having a soul, man the created creature of God, and therefore, Son of Man, God's created being, with whom God could communicate concerning His Affairs. The term also meant that only those “Sons” who walked in His Ways and who were close to Him could hear Him to receive His Instructions; hence, “Son of Man” also meant a prophet of God who could communicate with Him and be His spokesman. When I came to earth to deliver my message proclaiming the availability of God's Love to mankind, I considered myself the “Son of Man” as the prophet of God at the time, and in fact, so I was, for God—His Divine Love—was in my soul to a considerable degree and I knew what God wanted, and I strove to carry out His Wishes.

From 593 BC when Ezekiel first received his prophetic call, to 586 BC was a matter of seven years, in which the affairs of the exiles were becoming stabilized, but during this time the situation in Jerusalem deteriorated until the final destruction by Nebuchadnezzar took place. The same abuses, idolatries and political intrigues continued to flourish around the weak king, Zedekiah, who eventually succumbed to the pro-Egyptian party and made war upon Babylon. Ezekiel, according to some commentators, is supposed to have gone back to Jerusalem to observe the conditions that existed in the crumbling city, but actually he did not, for travelers and letters from Jerusalem were able to give the Hebrews in Babylonia a fairly accurate picture of conditions in Jerusalem, and Ezekiel remained in his adopted town, a place called Tel-abib on the Chebar, to bewail the evils of the Holy City and predict its eventual disaster. He constructed a relief map of Jerusalem, making use of kneading clay on tile to predict the coming siege, and restricted himself to a very unpleasant diet to indicate forcefully what the besieged people would be obliged to eat. He also cut off his hair and beard, which he divided into three parts—for burning, further cutting and scattering in the wind, to symbolize the complete destruction of Jerusalem. His descriptions of the coming fall, such as the parable of the boiling pot (Ezekiel 24: 3 – 13) which he devised from a passage in Jeremiah, are vivid, and show great intensity of feeling. This was not only to show Jehovah's wrath at Hebrew transgressions but to admonish the exiles that such transgressions must not make their appearances amongst them. The exiles had been saved from destruction by the Grace of God, although at the time of their march to Babylonia it had seemed like a great catastrophe. Yet here, in Israel's abject defeat to a foreign power, shone God's Love for His people.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 58

Received: April 15, 1963.

GOD'S LOSS OF JERUSALEM SYMBOLIZED BY THE DEATH OF THE PROPHET'S WIFE.

I am here, Jesus.

For Jerusalem, however, It seemed to Ezekiel that God had utterly turned His face from the city, and the prophet's personal experience with its destruction is one of the most touching in all of the Old Hebrew prophetic writings. Ezekiel's wife, "the desire of his eyes," was suddenly taken ill one morning and died that evening. She was a young woman in her mid-thirties, named Chavah, or first woman; modest and long-suffering in spirit and frail in health. Her death coincided with the capture of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians in July, 586 BC. Ezekiel did not know, to be sure, that this had happened until several months later, when a refugee having escaped from the destruction appeared in Tel-abib to relate the events of the fall of the city and gave the date of its capture.

Ezekiel had been expecting the worst for several years. His mind had gone back to Hosea, and the relationship between God and Israel, described as husband and wife (Ezekiel: 23). For example, the story of the foundling in Chapter 16 is that of a faithless Jerusalem, and God, the Royal Lover. On continuing the prophetic vein, Ezekiel thought of himself as reliving, in his own marriage, the spiritual union between God and Judah; and, given the demise of his beloved wife and the destruction of Jerusalem on the same day, he was struck by the thought that, as spokesman for God, his wife's death was symbolic of the loss of God's spouse—Jerusalem. Ezekiel, despite his sorrow and bereavement, was better able to console himself with this thought. But knowing in his heart that the city's loss represented a necessary and inevitable punishment for flaunting His Ways, he was moved to declare that he was commanded by God not to mourn the death of his wife by sitting the "Shivah," or customary mourning rites (removal of headgear, shoes, covering of the face and fasting for a week) as a sign that neither did God mourn the loss of his own spouse, Jerusalem. Ezekiel tells us that, with Chavah's death, he ceased his prophecies regarding Jerusalem's fall, inasmuch as the prophecy was thus fulfilled. But with the news of the disaster, he felt that "his mouth was opened," and that he could express his hopes for a future resurrection.

The simple passage of his wife's death, coming from the pen of the otherwise emphatic and oratorical prophet, is a most poignant account of a man's bereavement, illuminated by implicit faith in the Father:

The word from the Eternal came to me: "Son of man, behold I am taking from you at one stroke the treasure of your eyes. Yet thou shalt neither mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Sigh, but not aloud, make no mourning for the dead, bind thy headgear upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy beard, and eat not the bread of mourners." So I spoke to the people

in the morning: and at even my wife died, and I did in the morning as I was commanded. (Ezekiel: 24: 15 – 18)

I have used the words “future resurrection” in describing Ezekiel's hopes after the death of his wife, both in his personal life and with respect to the possibility of a restoration for Jerusalem. If Jehovah was the one, true God, He would restore His people and His own city not for their sake, but to show that the destruction and exile resulted from merited punishment and not from His own weakness, as pagan people of the times would assuredly assume. He therefore wrote the vision of the Dry Bones (Chapter 37), which relates the material bringing forth of the dead from their resting places, their return to life through the Spirit of God, and return of a righteous remnant to their homeland. Upon these elect, God would pour out His Spirit, making them, as Jeremiah had already predicted and which Ezekiel recognized as truth, new creatures walking in His Statutes:

A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your bosom, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My Statutes, and ye shall keep Mine Ordinances, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36: 26 - 28)

When I came to Jerusalem, I preached the fulfillment of this prophecy in me, the Messiah.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 59

Received: April 15, 1963.

EZEKIEL GAINED THE TITLE OF “FATHER OF JUDAISM.”

I am here, Jesus.

In the sign of the two sticks, Chapter 37, Ezekiel goes on to have God say that the people will be united as one nation, referring of course to the separate states, Israel and Judah, and governed forever by one shepherd, David, His servant (Ezekiel 37). The Lord also affirms that

He will make a lasting covenant of peace with them, and that He will set His sanctuary and tabernacle in the midst of them forever (Ezekiel 37).

This was a great prophecy of resurrection. To voice it, the vision of the Dry Bones was not a necessity. These bones, according to God, (Ezekiel 37: 11), represented “the whole house of Israel,” and they were “very dry” (Ezekiel 37: 2), indicating not only the most recent deaths, but those of countless generations of the past. Ezekiel, therefore, could not mean a return in the flesh to Israel, as some orthodox writers still insist, but he understood the Words of the Lord to mean a new or spiritual Israel where the departed in life would live in their renewed life, freed of the anxiety of death. This new land of Israel would no longer be used for burials: “Therefore thou (the land) shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord God.” (Ezekiel 36: 14) The Spirit of God cannot be interpreted to mean giving renewed life to the dead in a natural sense, as this would be a violation of material law which God respects, but simply the means of eliminating sin and permitting the soul a place in the new, spiritual Israel, whose location, as the Church of the New Birth calls it, is the Kingdom of the Perfect Natural Man. David, the servant of God, could not be here interpreted as meaning me, the Messiah, as the Divine Love had not been rebestowed, and Ezekiel had less insight into Its coming than did Jeremiah, but in this sense Ezekiel actually meant David's ruling over the united Hebrew nation in the spirit world, free of sin and enjoying the blessings of a purified existence. This resurrection would, thought Ezekiel, include his departed wife, for, as a symbol of destroyed Jerusalem, she too would be restored to a purified life, in the New Israel, in accord with the Dry Bones vision. However, the living Jews in Babylonia and the survivors in Jerusalem had to be taken care of. Therefore, the prophecy of the restoration of the people to the land of their fathers also had to mean the physical return of the living Jews to Judah and Jerusalem from exile, in accordance with the prophecies of the preceding prophets, with special emphasis on the moral regeneration of these returning Jews by virtue of the second covenant made between them and God, with the outpouring, as Jeremiah had said, of His Spirit upon them. We thus find in Ezekiel a curious superimposing of the spiritual upon the physical to include both the living and the departed of the past ages of Hebrews. David, the servant of God, in the material sense, thus becomes a living member of the House of David, and the shepherd caring for his flock. If you understand that Ezekiel was referring to a spiritual and material situation at the same time, you will thus appreciate that the physical descriptions, which are written with considerable visual power, have both spiritual and material meanings, and should thus be interpreted doubly.

The other prophecies have only material meanings. With the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel felt that prophecies of his predecessors were a certainty to occur. Thus the threat of the Northern barbarians, the Scythians, and the descriptions of warriors, are converted into the prophecy of the attack against a restored Israel by Gog, of the Land of Magog. There is such a people mentioned in Genesis 10: 2, but there was no such people or land in Ezekiel's time. The name was used to indicate Babylonia, a second invasion at a future period by those who at the time held the Hebrews captives. The account of God's fighting personally with His people, now independent, to destroy the invaders from the east gave the exiled Hebrews great satisfaction in reading that this time God would help to preserve the land of His regenerated nation, purified by their troubles and punishment. It gave the exiles hope and encouragement. At the same time the use of a name that could be revealed only by the deciphering of a Hebraic word code prevented the Babylonians from understanding its true intent and gave no offense to them. Let me state here,

and emphatically, that Gog and Magog have nothing to do with prophecies concerning modern leaders or nations, although recently Hitlerite Germany murdered the Jews on an unprecedented scale, while other nations, presumably of a high culture and professing Christianity, used technicalities to cover their indifference and even in some circles secret satisfaction, and Arab states under Nasser are now preparing openly to finish what the Nazis failed to accomplish. Although there have been persecutions of the Jews in Russia, Ezekiel did not have this nation in mind, regardless of all the literature which has been written on this subject by prelates and Bible commentators.

With the return to Jerusalem considered by Ezekiel a certainty, he felt the need to write out plans and specifications for the rebuilding of the Temple. Some of these are a remodeling of Solomon's Temple, but the outer courts and gates were to have a different layout. There was to be a Temple area, isolated from Jerusalem itself, for the prevention of any profanation, so that even the royal palace and the adjoining cemetery, which in the pre-exilic days stood close by, were to be eliminated. Various innovations were introduced, such as giving the Levites the menial tasks once performed by slaves, with the Zadokite priests of Jerusalem placed in a position of superiority with respect to the Levites, those priests of the rural area whose worship had been characterized by their impurities. Ezekiel's emphasis here was on purity, to insure Jehovah's eternal residence in the Temple sanctuary. The result was an emphasis on the ritual side of the religious life. It is easy to see that Ezekiel's earlier priestly training and experience provided the background for a revised and refined, as well as strict, ceremonial system. This holiness, thought Ezekiel, would by its own nature attend the righteous state of the Hebrews in the restored Jerusalem of moral rectitude, with the "heart of flesh," given the Hebrews by Jehovah Himself, the means of keeping sin and transgression from the elect. So important did this area of Ezekiel's thought become in his personality that he was thoroughly convinced this was the Will of God and saw the Temple in a vision, whereby he was carried to Jerusalem, or so he believed, by an angel. It was because of his elaborate plans for the restored Jerusalem and the greatly increased importance in the ceremonial life of the people, as well as the assurance of Jehovah's eternal residence in the Temple, that gained for Ezekiel the title of "Father of Judaism."

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 60
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THE DOUBLE VISION OF EZEKIEL'S PROPHECIES.

I am here, Jesus.

One of the reasons why Ezekiel was concerned with the priesthood and its function was knowledge that priests had not lived up to their duties to lead the people in the path of righteousness. This charge had been leveled against them before, and it was one of the reasons why the Hebrew kingdoms had perished. But now, declared Ezekiel, Jehovah Himself would care for His own. The picture of the shepherd and his flock, aglow with the love which Jehovah has for His people, presents one of the most beautiful and significant passages in the Jewish religion and has the deepest meaning for the Church of the New Birth, with the Messiah, spoken of here as the Lord's Servant, David, lovingly seeking out, and feeding with eternal life, the sheep of the Father's flock:

For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad; so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them. . . into their land, and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourse, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture; and upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be; they shall lie down in a good fold; and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountain of Israel. I myself will be the Shepherd of my sheep, and I shall cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Jehovah. I will seek that which is lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick. . . . And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David, prince among them. I, Jehovah, have spoken it. (Ezekiel 34: 11 – 24)

The passage has various meanings: To the exiled Hebrews of Babylonia, it meant a promise of a return to Israel with God Himself preparing the way and ensuring a homeland protected by His Zeal; but it also meant a homeland beyond your mortal life on earth. For the mountains of Israel, for the pious Jew, meant a place of holiness out of this earth, and the fields and watercourses signified the waters of eternal life. The 23rd Psalm, with its vision of future happiness in the life beyond, under God's protecting Love, was inspired, so I have already written, by these words of Ezekiel. The passage was also a promise of the coming of the Messiah. Restoration of Jerusalem was to take place through the workings of God Himself, but thereafter He would appoint a prince among them, His servant David, to be their shepherd.

I have spoken with Ezekiel about these matters, and he tells me that, in his writings, material and spiritual meanings were often possible in the same paragraphs. This was because he was a man of concrete thought through which spiritual content was projected.

Ezekiel's vision of dry bones, he states, was physical in nature, but that the spiritual message gave it the meaning that, at the time the resurrection was to take place, a new world order would have emerged from the material world in which men had been living. He thought

the resurrection, then, was possible on earth, having in this “world to come” spiritual qualities unknown to his own times. He also told me that, for this reason, many Biblical students have insisted upon an earthly and physical resurrection of the body, but that the vision, like many of those which came from God, could take on, and did, various meanings with the passing ages, as new insights into God's meaning were discovered. People in those days, and prophets themselves, he declares, were not amenable to meanings that indicated a spirit life, and messages from God were directed to amelioration of the moral and ethical life of the nation and the individual with continuance of sin a cause for destruction through God's wrath, and restoration a material reward for righteous behavior. The valley of dry bones thus had to mean, originally, a place on earth, but the time element was so far removed that Ezekiel felt he did not need to be concerned with it, and it was only that the place and time preoccupied succeeding generations, who understood more about the spiritual locale implied in the vision. In the same way passages concerning David, the servant of God, seems confusing at first because Ezekiel used the term to mean different things: in one case, a descendant of David ruling a material kingdom; again, David himself ruling a nation in the spirit world, and finally, the Messiah himself. The prophecies written before the fall of Jerusalem make David the ruler of the restored material nation, but those that were made after 586 BC, refer to a more spiritual David, or prince of the House of David.

In conclusion I should like to state that it was Ezekiel who brought full measure to the principle of individual responsibility, which had previously been expounded by Jeremiah. An innocent son was not to be punished with a guilty father. This concept, found in various statements (Numbers 16: 22) or (Deuteronomy 24: 16), of which Jeremiah was very much aware, was one which David as king could never have agreed to, and in fact, he acted in a contrary sense. But the passing of 400 years or more brought to full understanding and acceptance of individual, rather than family, innocence or guilt.

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SERMON 61
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THE SECOND ISAIAH—THE VOICE OF LIBERATION.

I am here, Jesus.

The voice of liberation, or redemption by the Lord, comes to the exiles of Babylonia with the rise of Cyrus, the Persian, prince of Anshan, who made himself ruler in his own country and

began sub-dividing his neighbors, winning a great victory from Croesus of Lydia, in 546 B. C., and eventually making himself master of Babylonia from 542 to 539 B. C. This Cyrus, whose name meant Sun, or King, has since been deeply respected, and mentioned with something approaching awe by Jews everywhere, for he issued a proclamation permitting the exiled Hebrews to return to their own land in 537 B. C. To the pious Jew, this sudden stroke of history in their favor seemed nothing less than the decision by the Lord to redeem His people from their exile. But to those who were now acclimated to economic conditions in Babylonia, whose ruler Nebuchadnezzar proved to be moderate in his dealings with the exiles, and whose son, Merodach, released from prison Jehoialim the captive king of Judah (561 BC), the proclamation by the new ruler Cyrus was greeted with concern and perplexity. It meant upheaval, a difficult journey, and the barest of prospects to people who, as a vast majority, knew only Babylonia as their home. Almost 50 years had passed since the day of the great disaster, remembered only by the most ancient, and simply a tradition, if a most sorrowful one, among the others. Hebrews could serve Jehovah in their adopted country, for Jews now believed that God was everywhere, and if His Temple, or His Home, was in Jerusalem, He was accessible to them in their prayers to Him in the synagogues, which had sprung up in the new land to perpetuate the love and worship of their God.

For the Jew of the exile had not renounced his devotion to Jehovah. If Israel had bowed before the pagans, it was not due to the weakness of their God, but because God had delivered into the hands of their enemies the people who had broken the covenant of moral and ethical living, which bound them to Him, substituting for His Laws iniquity in their conduct in human affairs and rejection of His worship in their practice of pagan cults.

In the foreign land, the Jews had sought to hold on to what was their religious and cultural heritage by teaching the young and carrying out the precepts given to them by Moses. Israel, in its time of trouble and affliction, had turned once more to God. If no man could claim Paradise while on earth, yet its spiritual insight and understanding had been sharpened and clarified. A keen observer could note the higher plane on which Israel lived normally, and a sudden event, as seen in a few years of war and conquest among the great nations of the time, could indeed, with justification, be interpreted as a sign that the Lord God of Israel had willed that the period of retribution for Israel had been fulfilled and that the time of redemption was at hand.

Just as in previous times the voice of Israel's prophets could be heard when great events were in the making, and they were voices usually of warning and admonition, so now the victorious campaigns of Cyrus, the Persian, against the Medes and Lydia, convinced one of Israel's great writers that the end was approaching for the Babylonian exile of the Jews. This new prophet, called the Second Isaiah, because his name was Isaiah, was born about the time of Ezekiel's death, and made his home in Babylon. His people, who were small traders in the Hebrew community of the capital, were devout Jews, and they provided Isaiah with all the necessary schooling in the Mosaic Law and the prophets. For the youth quickly showed his interest, his enthusiasm, his love for the religion of his forebears, and early voiced his determination to become a leader in teaching his people the beauties of his heritage. For Isaiah was alert, responsive, deeply emotional and spiritual in nature and he reacted in terms of feeling, movement and poetry. His imagination was fired by Cyrus' spectacular victories and, alive as he

was to the signs of Babylonian weaknesses, especially in the high places, he felt that this new sun in the political firmament foreshadowed a new day in the fortunes of the Jewish exiles.

The Persian triumph was consummated when Cyrus' General Gobryas defeated Belshazzar, the son of the reigning Babylonian Nabuna'id at the time (555-538 BC), in the battle of Opi 5 (539 BC) and entered the capital city, whose stronghold fell the following spring. Isaiah was present at this event, and saw the entourage of Cyrus himself parading through Procession Street, along which the religious festivals usually made their way. Isaiah was highly impressed with Cyrus, and in his subsequent writings referred to the Persian leader as a Messiah, appointed by God to liberate the exiles.

As a matter of fact, Cyrus was glad to have a friendly people, indebted to him for his generous treatment of them, and who would build up Jerusalem as a strong outpost for his far-flung empire. But Isaiah felt that, regardless of Cyrus' motives, the time for Israel's redemption had come. He was not the recipient of any vision, as in the case of Ezekiel, but, having studied this prophet's writings, was sure that the Temple was going to be rebuilt, and that Cyrus' presence in Babylonia was the proof.

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SERMON 62

Received: July 21, 1963.

ISAIAH, THE MESSENGER OF GOOD TIDINGS.

I am here, Jesus.

Isaiah's writings, therefore, are replete with personal emotion, with lyricism, and with exultation that the day of redemption had at long last arrived. He called himself the "Messenger of good tidings," and called upon the others, also, to proclaim the good news to Zion: "On a high mountain get you up O heralds of good news to Zion! Lift up your voice with strength. . . ." (Isaiah 40: 9)

Now, when I spoke in Palestine, I was also the bearer of good tidings—the redemption of the soul from sin unto everlasting life through the Gift of the Father's Love, which He had made available to mankind with my coming. I therefore felt that my cue in preaching the Father's Love should be taken from the Second Isaiah, the preacher of redemption from exile and God's forgiveness of Israel's sinful past, in that Israel had forsaken its former iniquities to renew its covenant with Him. This did not mean complete freedom from sin, as Isaiah was aware, but it did mean a sincere effort on the part of Israel to mend its ways, a fact which greatly pleased the

Heavenly Father who was quick to show his appreciation in shaping, through His instrumentalities, events leading to the liberation of His people at the time. Isaiah, as did Ezekiel, took this to mean that the Lord was doing this for His Own Sake. (Isaiah 43: 25) The prophet himself made this plain in his poetry: “Her warfare is accomplished. Her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.” (Isaiah 40: 2)

By “warfare,” the Second Isaiah meant Israel's time of punishment. And again he declares: “Jacob was given for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers because they sinned against the Lord.” (Isaiah 42: 24)

But with Cyrus' might and magnanimity in dazzling array, Isaiah thought the Persian leader must be the Lord's anointed and, as I have already mentioned, called him Messiah (Chap. 45, verse 1). Also in Chapter 44, verse 28 he has the Lord call him “My shepherd.” Now this was difficult for followers of the earlier prophets to accept, and when Isaiah recited his verses in the synagogue, he was reminded quickly that only a son of the royal house of David could be the Messiah, or the Lord's shepherd. So Isaiah had to explain that actually the use of the word “shepherd” was a play of words so frequent in Hebrew, and which I was fond of myself, for Cyrus, though meaning “Sun,” in the analogous Cassite tongue, is “Kuras,” meaning Shepherd. And he also explained, in verses composed shortly thereafter, that the term “Messiah” was used not in spiritual terms, but as a material instrument of God, such as He had used to punish the people in days gone by. Cyrus was going to bring about God's Will of redemption from exile. He has God declare:

I have roused him up in victory.
And I make level all his ways;
He shall build My city,
And he shall let Mine exiles go free,
Not for price or reward, saith the Lord of hosts. (Isaiah 45: 13)

But let me return to Isaiah and the theme of the people's return to the land of Israel. This redemption now at hand is thus the work of God, who commands and disposes at His Will. Isaiah tries to emphasize the greatness of Jehovah to the people, who have seen the mighty armies of Babylonia, and now of Persia, serving gods of wood and iron. In Babylon they have watched the parades, learned the story of the fertility queen of heavens and dying deities, and seen the shrine to Tammuz. Isaiah, on different occasions, emphasizes the nothingness of the pagan gods and the certainty of Jehovah as the one spiritual living God, with Whom Israel has a covenant of righteous conduct, and who loves Israel with a love surpassing that of human understanding; and he states, as did Hosea before him:

But Zion says, “Jehovah has deserted me
and the Lord has forgotten me,”
Can a woman forget her baby,
And not have pity on the child of her womb?
Even if these shall forget, yet I will not forget thee.
See, I have engraved thee on my palms,
Thy walls are constantly before me. (Isaiah 49: 14 – 16)

Once again did the Second Isaiah deliver a message on the Father's Love, done in God's Own Words to His people, so stirring, so beautiful, so deep and sincere, that these lines, if inspired originally by Hosea, stand forth as among the greatest in religious verse, never to fade or die wherever there will be people to respond to the Father's Love:

For like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, has Jehovah called thee,
And like a wife from youth when she is rejected, says thy God forsook thee;
. . . .But with great mercies will I gather thee.
In quick anger I hid my face from thee for a moment.
But with enduring love will I have compassion on thee;
Says thy vindicator, Jehovah.
For like the days of Noah is this to me;
In that I swore that the waters of Noah shall not again pass over the earth;
So have I sworn not to be angry with thee, nor rebuke thee.
For the mountains may remove, and the hills may totter,
But my Love will not leave thee, nor will my covenant of peace waver;
says Jehovah who has compassion on thee. (Isaiah 54: 6 – 10)

Here is the Heavenly Father, pouring out His Divine Love for His people, as He loves all people, regardless of race or nationality, seeking their return to Him in those days in a covenant of walking humbly with Him and doing justly and mercifully, as He now seeks them in a covenant of Divine Love—to love one another and Him, through sincere prayer for His Love, which became available to mankind with my coming. The terrible days of Jerusalem's destruction by Titus was, as God had promised, not due in any way to anger, for He had none, but was brought about by adherence to a material concept of national policy, that led Israel into the iron grip of material laws and subsequent destruction by ruthless Rome.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 63
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THE SECOND ISAIAH—THE PROPHET OF THE EXILE.

I am here, Jesus:

A survey of the Second Isaiah's writings brings one to the Servant Songs, a revolution in religious thinking that was of major importance in shaping the basic doctrine of Christianity as a prototype of a faultless victim bearing the sins of mankind and thereby securing its salvation. These Servant Songs must be distinguished from the Song of Songs, written in the days of King Solomon, wherein is depicted, in descriptive language that seems at times entirely too graphic for a spiritual subject of this dimension, God's Love for Israel, under the guise of a man's love for his wife. You will remember that this also was Hosea's concept, except that Gomer was an erring wife, and that Israel, as His wife or church, had deserted Him for pagan deities.

This erring wife could be redeemed if she abandoned her lovers and returned to her spouse, and Israel could be redeemed if she gave up her sins and returned to God. This had been the theme, constant and insistent, of the subsequent prophets. They saw in Israel a sinful wife facing disaster unless she returned to the ordinances of the moral code which gave her spiritual union with her husband. And when Jerusalem fell before Nebuchadnezzar, the prophets of the time felt that the predictions of Hosea, Amos and Isaiah (the first) had been fulfilled, and that Israel, the wife, had been cast away for her sins.

But Israel could be redeemed by a return to God and purification of the soul. Undoubtedly a considerable improvement in the moral level of the exiles took place in Babylonia, and the people accepted the teachings of the prophets, endured their hardships as sojourners in a foreign land, and sought to become more ethical and live by the Statutes of God, and retain faith in Him.

At the same time, however, the people could not achieve the level demanded of them by the prophets contemporary with the time of the exile. Jeremiah had been in despair because his admonitions had been in vain. He had wished he had never been born; he suffered immeasurably from the indifference of the people to his warnings, and their continual adherence to the material. His writings show with great dramatic power that Jeremiah was a servant of God, not only seeking desperately to bring the people back to God but suffering intensely in following out God's Instructions. Jeremiah can truly be called a suffering servant of God.

Ezekiel, who, as is known, experienced the exile at first hand, lived among the people of Babylonia and predicted a return to a New Jerusalem and a restored Temple, also called himself a suffering servant of God. As a matter of fact, in the Book of Ezekiel, Chapter 4, God lays upon the prophet the iniquity of the people of Israel, just as, later, in the Second Isaiah, the iniquity of the people is laid upon the suffering servant. In this Chapter 4, which I am explaining now since it helps to clear up the confusion as to the meaning of the Servant Songs, God instructs the prophet Ezekiel to act out the besieging of Jerusalem, as a sign to the people of Israel, both in the first exile of 597 BC, and to the people of Jerusalem, to forgo their sinful behavior and pagan worship, and return to God in repentance and clear hearts. Ezekiel is instructed to lie first on one side, then on another, for a certain number of days, each representing a year during which time the prophet has taken upon himself the iniquity of the people. I thus show you that Ezekiel, on the Command of God, took upon himself the sins of his people, and this is exactly what the Second Isaiah wrote in the Servant Songs. It is the suffering Servant of God who has done so. I want you to read this passage from Ezekiel in Chapter 4, verses 4-6:

Moreover lie thou upon thy left side and lay the iniquity of the House of Israel upon it; according to the number of the days

that thou shalt lie upon it, thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have appointed the years of their iniquity to be unto thee a number of days, even 390 days; so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the House of Israel. And again, when thou hast accomplished these, thou shalt lie on thy right side, and shalt bear the iniquity of the House of Judah; 40 days, each day for a year, have I appointed thee.

Thus, in his obedience to the instructions of the Lord, Ezekiel was bearing the iniquity of the Hebrew people for 430 days, or representing 430 years of sinful behavior of the people. If I were to assume that this sinfulness ended in 586 BC, with the total destruction of Jerusalem, this iniquity of the people began about the time of Saul's monarchy, or when the people sought a human ruler instead of keeping God as their King. Again, 390 years represented the time from Jeroboam's altar of golden calves to the captivity, Israel's sin; and 40 years symbolized also the time from the broken treaty of Josiah's reformation to the same captivity, Judah's sin.

At any rate, the Second Isaiah, in his Servant Songs, has as justification for his use of his suffering servant of God a passage from the Old Testament itself, and Ezekiel, of course, had in mind for his suffering servant one whom you already suspect: none other than Jeremiah.

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SERMON 64

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THE SECOND ISAIAH WROTE THE SUFFERING SERVANT SONGS.

I am here, Jesus.

But there is more to the suffering servant Songs which the Second Isaiah wrote than the identity of the suffering servant, which you will see was transformed by the prophet to meet the requirements of the changing times. This servant of God had to be conceived as dying in order for his noble deed (in taking the sins of his people upon himself) to have any effect. In the first place, in the Hebrew rite of Atonement, a sacrificial goat became the sin offering, in that it bore the iniquity of the congregation, and was sent out into the desert to die. In the land of Canaan, the concept of the dying god, and its relationship to agriculture, was well-known to the Hebrews who came into possession of the country at the time of the Exodus from Egypt and acquired their knowledge of agricultural pursuits from the Canaanites. This was the death of the god in autumn and his rebirth in the spring; the planting and the harvest. This concept, as found here and in other Eastern lands, had a most important effect upon Christianity as it is now understood, and

one early Greek writer of the Gospels had me to say: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12: 24)

I never said this, to be sure, but the thought behind this was to make early converts to Christianity feel I was a god like the pagan deities who had to die to be resurrected. My death and resurrection had nothing to do with the seasons or agricultural processes, but the latter was certainly the fulfillment of the power of Divine Love.

Among the exiles in Babylon, a similar concept was in vogue making for their assimilation with pagan practices. In fact, the Book of Ezekiel, Chapter 8, relates that a spirit brought the prophet in a vision to Jerusalem and the Temple where all kinds of abominations were being practiced. The Spirit of God then brings Ezekiel to the entrance of the North Gate of the Temple, where women were worshipping Tammuz, the Babylonian god. Here is what Ezekiel wrote: "Then He brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was towards the north; and, behold, there sat the women weeping for Tammuz." (Ezekiel 8: 14)

The Babylonian god, Tammuz, therefore, was well-known in Jerusalem and even worshipped by some Hebrews in the Temple itself, and his cult was very well understood, if not in some cases actually adhered to, among the Jews in Babylonia. A series of songs by the Second Isaiah, combining a scapegoat prophet of Jehovah, who became identified with the people, Israel itself, and a propitiatory dying god, Tammuz, were quite acceptable as a prophet's message to the Hebrews in exile.

Now Tammuz, like other gods of this type, conformed to the Egyptian Osiris- Isis legend, differing in some unimportant details. He was Sumerian and Assyrian as well as Babylonian, and represented the withering and reviving vegetation. This god, brother and lover of Ishtar, the heaven and earth goddess, descended each year into the underworld, and was brought back to earth by her for a season, during which time flocks and plants flourished. During the time of his annual death, descent and sojourn into the netherworld, which naturally took place in the heat and drought of mid-summer, and continued until spring rains brought a renewal of plant life, there took place the religious wailing for Tammuz, conducted by a priestess of Ishtar and her women devotees, as Ezekiel mentioned it in his Chapter 8. There were many ramifications and inconsistencies as to the relationship of Ishtar to the god, some cultists calling her "sister," others "mother," and also "lovers," inasmuch as it was his fecundation of the earth that brought the growth and harvest and, like Osiris, he was slain and drowned in the water. At the New Year celebration at Babylon, corresponding to September, the god Marduk, identified with Tammuz, was slain with an evil-doer, descended into the other world, was brought back by Ishtar (here regarded as mother), and proceeded to come forth from a sepulcher to bring life to the world. I am quite aware that all this has a fairly close analogy with Christianity as it is now taught, and is one of the important reasons why this Christianity spread so quickly among the pagan peoples, who knew and accepted a kind of theology in varied form so similar to their own.

The forgoing, in a very brief way, represents the background to the famous Servant Songs of the Second Isaiah. To repeat, he blended the role of the prophet as the suffering servant of God, taking on the sins of the people, with the role of a pagan god annually dying and being resurrected to bring renewed life to earth.

At the same time, as the Second Isaiah continued to write his prophecies, under the impact of King Cyrus' decree permitting the exiles to return to Jerusalem, and the exultation that the Lord had finally redeemed his people, there developed in him the conviction that this Hebrew

people, exiled into a strange land and now returning home, was much like the god Tammuz, returning to earth after his stay in the netherworld, and that the prophet, spokesman of God, represented the redeemed portion of the people of Israel.

Jesus of the Bible,
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 65

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THE SECOND ISAIAH'S TWOFOLD CONCEPT OF THE FATHER.

I am here, Jesus.

The Second Isaiah developed a twofold concept of the Father as a result of Cyrus' kindness to the Hebrews. Cyrus, a pagan, was an instrument of God's Will on earth to release the Jews, just as the Assyrians and Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian, were His instruments to chastise His people for their backsliding. In short, the God of Israel is the only God, the universal God of all nations. In reaffirming Cyrus as the Messiah, God, Himself says through the Second Isaiah: "I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make strait all his ways." (Isaiah 45: 12 – 13)

And again, God reiterates: ". . .there is none beside Me. I am Jehovah, and there is none else." (Isaiah 45: 6)

And again in Chapter 45: 22 - 23:

Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;
For I am God, and there is none else.
. . . the word is gone from My mouth in righteousness,
and shall not return; that unto Me every knee shall bow,
every tongue shall swear.

The earth itself, in the fullness of time, will be destroyed, as will all material things, to rebuild and regroup into other transitory forms, but God and His Salvation will remain forever:

. . . for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke,
And the earth shall wax old like a garment,
And they that dwell therein shall die like gnats;

But My Salvation shall be forever,
And My Righteousness shall not be abolished. (Isaiah 51: 6)

Now the Hebrews, or the people of Israel, are the instruments of God through whom knowledge of Him must be given to the Gentiles. This is demonstrated through the history of the people who, through their leaders, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David and the prophets, have known and accepted the Lord, and who in their darkest days of defeat have retained their faith in Him. And thus it is that the Hebrews are the Servants of the Lord, Israel is the Servant of the Lord, with the mission of bringing salvation to the Gentiles.

The Second Isaiah, then, with insight unsurpassed in the history of religion, wrote his four Servant Songs, interpreting Israel, the Suffering Servant of God, as the people called to bring God to the nations through suffering, just as the prophets, especially Jeremiah, and emphasized in the writings of Ezekiel, suffered and took upon themselves the iniquities of the uncomprehending people.

Now these Servant Songs are four in number and I am going to analyze each the light of the background I have written. The first is in Second Isaiah, Chapter 42: 1 – 4:

Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth;
I have put My Spirit upon him,
He shall make the right to go forth to the nations.

He shall not cry, nor lift up,
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.
A bruised reed shall he not break,
And the dimly burning wick shall he not quench.

He shall make the right to go forth according to the truth;
He shall not fail nor be crushed,
Till he has set the right in the earth;
And the isles shall wait for his teachings.

This passage attracted the quick notice of copyists seeking any relationship between the Christ and Old Testament prophecy to show fulfillment of the Scriptures in my coming. Here they underlined “I have put my spirit upon him,” which they thought must refer to me, but which actually refers back to the great words in Jeremiah foretelling the New Covenant. It meant that, since the Hebrews were being permitted to return to Jerusalem, they were redeemed of the Lord and the prophecy of the “heart of flesh” was now fulfilled. They would return without sin and teach knowledge of God to the nations. The description of Israel as a people so spiritual that they would not break a bruised reed or blow out a lighted candle was thought by the Christian writers as referring to me, in that I offered no resistance to arrest, but actually this description merely portrays the people Israel when possessed of the Spirit of God acting in them. The Second Isaiah

had in mind Jeremiah as his model for the people Israel when redeemed from sin by the Spirit of God.

The prophet ends his song by referring to Israel's not failing or being crushed until bringing the truth into the world. This could have referred to me, as bringing to light the Divine Love of the Father, but it also meant that the promise of the Father's Love had already been brought to mankind, and also it meant the return of a redeemed people devoted to God, before Jeremiah's death.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 66

Received: July 21, 1963.

JESUS FURTHER EXPLAINS ISAIAH'S SONGS.

I am here. Jesus.

The second song is found in Isaiah 49: 1 – 6:

The Lord hath called me from the womb,
From the bowels of my mother, hath He made mention my name;
And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword,
In the shadow of His hand hath He hid me; . . .
And He said unto me: Thou art My servant,
O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

The meaning here is that God had spotted Israel to make known His Name and worship to the people from the very ancient times when Abraham had come to Palestine and when the Hibri tribes had been nomads in the desert. The language here is, of course, very figurative and employed by other prophets with the same intent.

In the third song, God Himself speaks (Isaiah 52: 13 – 15):

Behold, My servant shall prosper,
He shall be exalted and extolled.
Many were astonished at him because his face was so marred,
It was no longer like that of a man.

Therefore many nations will marvel; kings will keep quiet before him,
For what had not been told them, they shall see,
And shall consider what they had not heard.

This did not refer to the Christ, as the Messiah stricken on the cross, as many orthodox Christians have been taught to believe erroneously, but to the people of Israel who, in the words of the Lord caught by the Second Isaiah, would be so transformed from the suffering, woebegone, desolate image presented by the Babylonian captivity, that many nations would be startled by the great change wrought by God in their return to their homeland, and even kings would remain dumbfounded by the transfiguration—God’s redemption of Israel.

That this is so may be seen more clearly from Chapter 51, verses 17 – 23, where Isaiah speaks and then quotes God Himself to that effect. These verses begin:

Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk
At the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury;
Therefore, hear now this, thou afflicted
Thus saith the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause
Of His people; behold I have taken out of thy hand the cup of
trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury;
Thou shalt no more drink it again.
But I will put it into the hand that afflicts thee

And following this, in Chapter 52, verse 7, is that magnificent verse, which thrilled my heart, beginning:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that
Bringeth good tidings, that publishes peace (Love).
That bringeth good tidings of good (soul satisfaction);
That publishes salvation; that saith unto Zion,
Thy God reigneth!

So you see that the third Servant Song refers to Israel, the people, the return to Jerusalem, and redemption through God’s Love.

But the most controversial of these Servant Songs is the extraordinary Chapter 53, which I wish to explain in detail. The chapter begins:

Who hath believed our report? (what we heard),
And to whom was the arm of God revealed?

The meaning is: who could believe the report that Cyrus had permitted repatriation of the Hebrews? And to whom did God reveal His arms (give military power) in order to liberate them? Not even to the Jews themselves, but to Cyrus.

The chapter continues—and here we have the Second Isaiah give the astonishment of the Babylonians themselves, who, as I now interpret the poetry, declare:

For Israel grew up before His God a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. Israel had no beauty or culture, that we Babylonians should be attracted to him. He was despised and forsaken by other nations, (weak vassals to our might) A nation ailing and feeble and acquainted with sickness in body. And as one from whom others hide their face, He was despised, and we in our own power had no use for this weakling.

In short, to the Chaldeans, Israel was a weak herb planted by his god without a proper firmness to withstand storms and adversity. He had no strong virility, neither works of art nor architecture, (naturally, because the Hebrews were forbidden to make graven images), and because of his enslaved position. Without government or organized army of his own, he was weak and diseased in structure as a nation, and therefore the other pagan nations looked at this beaten Israel with scorn. He was forsaken by the other countries of that area of the world, and suffered because he was an outcast among the other powers.

The Second Isaiah then goes on to have the Babylonians explain the meaning of Israel's suffering, although as a poet he inherited from Ezekiel the art of projection: he could make the same verses mean two things at the same time. Here he does this by deliberately refraining from identifying the subject. Therefore it is possible to regard the following verses not only from a Chaldean view but also as a reference to Israel as a people, and the stricken one as a prophet of the people whom we can identify not as one single person, but as a combination of Ezekiel, in a literary sense, as I have said, and as Jeremiah from the standpoint of actual suffering. Never did the Second Isaiah have any thought in his mind as to an actual Messiah, atoning for the sins of his people, through a redemptive death, but to the religious rites of the Babylonians, who, as the speakers of the following lines, interpret the suffering Israel in accordance with their own religious beliefs in a dying and resurrected fertility deity.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 67
Received: July 21, 1963.

MANY CHRISTIANS REGARD THESE SERMONS AS PROPHETIC.

I am here, Jesus.

To continue with Chapter 53: 4 - 6:

Surely he [Israel, or the prophet]
Has borne our sicknesses, and carried our sufferings,
While we esteemed him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement of our peace was upon him;
And with his bruises we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned every one to his own way;
And Jehovah laid upon him the punishment of us all.

Here the Second Isaiah, as he has told me, had in mind the sins, cruelty, oppressions and barbarisms, not only of his own days, but the savagery and abominations that attended the slow course of history, and he felt that, although Israel had surely sinned and transgressed, as the plain Scriptures made clear, yet the throat-cutting, ritual slaughter of children and captives, and the incredible inhuman behavior among the heathens, which had called forth so many invectives of fierce anger among the prophets, was a record of positive fact of which Jehovah was intensely aware and which had to be punished, and who should be punished but he who knew God and had therefore less excuse for iniquity—Israel? (Or, if I interpret the victim as the prophet, one who knew God more so than the people?)

Thus in his verses the Second Isaiah here makes the Babylonians have a sense of their own sins and moral failings, and realize that Israel received the punishment of God for the sins which they and other pagan nations had committed. Hence the Second Isaiah elevated to a moral plane the agricultural rites conceived with the god Tammuz, and makes the innocent suffer for the guilty in a sort of vicarious atonement quite at home with the pagan concept of the dying god, and at the same time evoking an emotional response in Hebrews familiar with Ezekiel's writings and Jeremiah's sufferings.

The prophet, once having combined these elements, now stresses the humiliation and death of the nation-prophet along traditional Babylonian lines, as contained in Second Isaiah, 53: 7 - 9:

He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself, and opened not his mouth, As a Lamb is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb. By oppressive judgment he was taken away. And who took note of his fate that he was cut off out of the land of the living, for our transgressions smitten to death? And they made his grave with the wicked, and with evildoers his mound, although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

These words are extremely interesting, first from the literary aspect, in that they form inspired religious poetry, depicting the punishment of the scapegoat nation-prophet preceding redemption and containing a high emotional appeal, and second because many Christians regard these verses as prophetic, seeming to point to the Christ to come. But I am interested in explaining the source or composition of these verses to show they did not refer to me in any way, but followed a line of thought determined by Israel's sorrowful situation as exiles in the land of the Babylonian overlords.

Given the nation-prophet as scapegoat, to take upon himself the sins of others, which is, as I have already shown, purely Hebrew in concept, the Second Isaiah sought the locale and circumstances in the actual Babylonian religious experience. In the early pagan spring festival or Sacaea the god Murduk and Ishtar, the fertility goddess, triumphed over the forms of death represented by the autumn - winter seasons. The same view characterized the cult of Tammuz. In very ancient times the triumph was brought about through the death of the king; and his offspring, his son, would reign in his stead revitalizing youth. But this spectacle was gradually replaced in the festival play, first in which the son died instead, and finally, wherein a criminal, condemned to death, was taken from prison to enact the role of the king, and was actually mocked, scourged and then put to death in this bloody pagan sacrifice. This spectacle was repeated yearly in the spring and the Hebrew prophet, as well as the Hebrew community in Babylon, was intensely aware of this barbarous practice. Thus the verses just cited refer to this festival of Sacaea. The sacrificed criminal, who died in place of the king's son to bring life again to the fields and food for the people, is blended with the image of the Hebrew nation- prophet dying to bring life again to the nation and to all peoples through the redemptive action, as the pagans thought, of their deity.

I repeat that Christians traditionally thought this to refer to me, and they have eagerly seized upon such details as the "lamb" led to the slaughter, and others which have been "explained" ad nauseam in their books of theology. But let me disabuse them once again that I am not a "dying god" either of the Babylonian, Christian, or any other sect, come to take away the sins of mankind with my dried up blood, but Jesus, the Messiah, come to make available to mankind the eternal life of the soul, through prayer to the Father for His Love.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 68
Received: July 21, 1963.

THE SECOND ISAIAH PREACHED VINDICATION OF HIS PEOPLE.

I am here, Jesus.

According to the King James version, the Second Isaiah then goes on to say in Chapter 53: 8:

He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who shall declare his generation?
For he was cut off from the land of the living,
For the transgressions of my people was he stricken.

However, this version is not very accurate, and the meaning should be as follows:

By an oppressive judgment he was taken away;
And who took notice of his fate,
That he was cut off from the land of the living,
And for our transgressions smitten unto death?

Here the Second Isaiah had in mind one prophet, Jeremiah, and the sufferings, in spite of his innocence, which he went through before death. He also combined this with Israel, the nation, whose destruction by Babylonia meant nothing in the eyes of a pagan world, and which died as a nation, although its moral standards, at least among many or most of the people, were far superior to those of the pagans who had been permitted to survive and wreck judgment upon Israel.

But this, affirms the Second Isaiah, was done with divine planning. Who but a more moral and ethical Israel could bring a higher standard for the pagans, and show them the way to God and His statutes of morality, of justice and mercy? For that reason Israel had made his grace with the wicked, and with evildoers his mound, although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth (verse 9). The prophet continues with Chapter 53: 10 – 11:

But it pleased the Lord to crush him; for, if he had made his soul an offering for sin, he would suffer for a long time, but the purpose of God would succeed through him. As a result of the sufferings which his soul goes through in his material afflictions (Jeremiah's sufferings for standing for love of God and right living, and Israel's sufferings in exile among the Babylonian evildoers in their conduct) he will see light and be gratified by the knowledge that he is pleased unto the Lord who in this way will be able to reveal Himself to the Gentiles by having Israel in their midst, and lead them to a higher moral life and knowledge of God.

This is the real meaning of verses 10 and 11, as these are very confused in the King James version, which I quote to you now for comparison:

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days,

and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. . .

I will continue with Chapter 53, verse 12:

The vindication of My Servant is for many peoples, and it is their punishment that he has been bearing; their evils and aggressions, instead of being punished by God as deserved, was deferred, and Israel alone was led to suffering and disaster, to live amongst them and by his example instruct them in righteous living through adherence to God's Statutes. Therefore, says God, I shall divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; in short, Israel shall live again as a nation, intellectually virile and materially prosperous.

I say that, unfortunately, here the words and construction in the original Hebrew, up to the concluding lines, are in a poor state of preservation, even in the spirit world, and the Second Isaiah has told me that he was writing poetry, and not prose, and that the meaning had to be fitted into a poetic pattern, but that the translations that have been rendered for the poorly reconstructed texts do not give the meaning he meant to convey. When the translation reads: "he was numbered with the transgressors," it meant that Israel was considered so by Nebuchadnezzar, and that Jeremiah was considered a transgressor by the royal circle, and also by the Egyptians; and that the words, "and that he has been making intercession for the transgressors" does not mean that Israel is praying to God that the sins of evil-doing nations be pardoned, as this, as you know, is an impossibility in the spirit world, but meant that Israel will show other nations the way to right living before God, that nations can live in peace and happiness amongst themselves on earth with God, the God of all nations, bringing confraternity, brotherhood and love to His creatures. The Second Isaiah tells me that the words quoted above should read: "he has been making religious enlightenment for the transgressors, showing them the Way to Him."

That this is the true meaning of the prophet's poetry, as he tells me, is shown by the following passage written by him in Chapter 49: 5 – 6 wherein he wrote:

And now the Lord did say; He that formed me from the womb to be His Servant: that He would bring Jacob again to him, and Israel should be gathered unto Him, and I (Israel) should be honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God, has become my strength; and He said, the raising up of the tribes of Jacob and the restoration of the preserved of Israel are less significant than that thou shouldst be My Servant; so I will give thee as a light to the Gentiles, that My Salvation may be to the ends of the earth.

And as I realized, before I began my mission, that God's Love was prophesied to be for all people who seek His Salvation, for God, through the Servant Israel, was to be made known to all people, first in righteousness and moral living and then, through me, His Messiah, His Divine Love and Mercy.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 69

Received: April 1, 1964.

THE THIRD ISAIAH MODELS HIS STYLE AFTER THAT OF THE SECOND ISAIAH.

I am here, Jesus.

The trek to Jerusalem, in the days of the Second Isaiah, did not happen as the prophet would have liked: a triumphant march back to the land of Israel, with song and cheer, and a great multitude giving thanks to God for His redemption of the land, and the redemption of the people from sin. The return to Jerusalem was a slow trickle, undertaken by some of the young, the pioneers in spirit, a few of the older folks whose religious zest was so high that hardship and death on the sacred soil of Israel were preferable to life in an alien land, given to paganism and abomination. The voice of the Second Isaiah, then, diminishes in its loudness and exultation: not all of the people, thus, will be redeemed; only that remnant that returns to the Holy Land and is redeemed in heart by faith in the Lord and love for the homeland—a homeland given by God to the Hebrews as His Promise to His chosen people.

The Third Isaiah was called so because he continued the plea of his predecessor for the return to Jerusalem from Babylon. With the same great faith in the Lord as Redeemer, this Isaiah was a young man who felt that a renewed voice of thanksgiving unto the Lord for His shaping of events in favor of the Hebrews was then more than ever necessary; the disappointment of the Second Isaiah must not be the final word on the return to Jerusalem while the slow movement back was in progress. A new voice, powerful and triumphant, must go forth in the name of the Lord of Hosts once more to the people, encouraging them to forgo their Babylonian living and return to the land of Jehovah.

Therefore, the Third Isaiah modeled his style on that of the Second Isaiah wherever he could, and it is this that causes many students of the Isaiah group of writings to believe that there were only two Isaiahs.

However, the Third Isaiah felt it was not for him to turn to those who had gone to Jerusalem, or were so planning and in the process of so doing; these were, to him, as to the Second Isaiah, the righteous remnant. Therefore he understood that his message was to the unredeemed bulk of the people who were loath to give up home and livelihood in Babylon to plod their way back over a vast desert to a land in ruins and with little means of subsistence. The new Isaiah felt that this reluctance was transgression against God, who had very clearly made known His Will for the Hebrews: He had created a miracle to make possible the return to His

Holy Land of Israel, and they who sought not to do His Will and return were sinful. The prophet, therefore, turned to them in the spirit of the older prophets exhorting the people to forgo their sins and turn to the Lord, and much of the subject matter reads like other prophets on the transgression of the people. But, he declares, the righteousness of the Lord will in the end triumph, and not only will the people return to Jerusalem, but the Gentiles, seeing the light at last—Israel's sacrifice to bring the truth to all peoples, as I explained in Chapter 53, of the Second Isaiah—will acknowledge the Lord God of Israel, throw away their pagan ways and their abominations, and come to Jerusalem to worship at the Shrine of the Eternal God of Soul and Universe. The voice of the new prophet rings out in Chapter 55, and deals with the theme of the return to the Lord for salvation. In my day in Jerusalem, I was very much impressed with his opening lines, and in my own sermons (John 7: 37), I used the concept of thirst and hunger to satisfy the soul longings for salvation.

Here are the opening verses from the Third Isaiah:

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,
And he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat;
Yea, come, buy wine and milk and honey without money and without price.
Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not the Bread of Life?
And your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully unto me, and eat ye that which is good,
And let your soul delight in its satisfying love.
Incline your ear, and come unto me. . . . (Isaiah 55: 1 – 3)

The Hebrew says:

Rich nourishment for the soul,
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I shall make a covenant with you,
Even the sure mercies of David. (Isaiah 55: 3)

Here, of course “David” meant the person who should be the “Christ,” and his mercies meant His redeeming Love, and the Messiah of God. The Third Isaiah did not know exactly what the “mercies of David” meant, but he wrote this knowing that it did not refer to the historical person, King David, and that the phrase, used often by prophets, had a connotation far beyond the original meaning, and referring in some way to the redemptive power of God, through His agent on earth.

In Isaiah 61: 1 – 3, I used the opening lines in a sermon delivered to my people in the synagogue in Nazareth, though the words are recorded somewhat differently:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me;
Because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek.
He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, . . .
To comfort all that mourn. . . in Zion,
To give unto them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning. . . .

In Luke 4: 18 - 19 in the New Testament, I am quoted as follows:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;
He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted,
To preach deliverance to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised.
To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 70

Received: September 1st, 1964.

*JESUS USED THE THIRD ISAIAH'S OPENING LINES WHEN HE SPOKE IN
NAZARETH.*

I am here, Jesus.

These great lines of the Third Isaiah had tremendous importance for those who heard his discourse. It meant that this new Isaiah had obtained his voice directly from God, and that an entirely new dispensation was at hand. The old defeats, the frustrations, the proneness to sin, were being washed away in God's waters of oblivion. It was a discourse, meant in the physical sense: the people were to be free, prideful in the assumption of their heritage on earth, the land of Israel, to be followed by miracles of binding up physical wounds as well as moral smarting. The mourning and the ashes of death and destruction, resulting from the loss of the Temple, would disappear before the glorious rebirth of God's House on Mount Moriah, and the joys and exultation which worship here would give to His people.

When I spoke to my people in Nazareth, I used the opening lines of the Third Isaiah's magnificent poetry to also indicate a new dispensation—not in the physical sense, but in the soul sense: the Father's Love available to all those who should seek It in prayer would break the

chains and overcome the misery of the Roman occupation. The sight restored to the blind and the liberty recovered by the captives, in the face of the subjugation of our land by these cruel pagans, could not mean the same thing for the people who heard me and the populace, 600 years before, who heard the words of the Third Isaiah.

The Jews of Babylonia were settled in the homeland of their conquerors, treated tolerably to remain where they could make their livelihood; the Jews of Israel of my time, under the lash of the Roman, were extremely sensitive, perhaps taut to the breaking point, over anything that infringed the sovereignty of the Jewish homeland, promised to them again by God through the Third Isaiah.

The Jews who heard my words of Love were dedicated more to the expulsion of the Romans than to the proposition of overcoming through Love. In the light of their grim experiences with the Roman overlords, they could not understand my message.

As a matter of fact the remainder of the sermons of the Third Isaiah, Chapters 64 - 66, deals very much with the New Jerusalem, the elect of the Jews and the glory of the land which God has given unto His people. It emphasizes the forgiveness of God towards His erring people, and the command to go forth and inhabit the land of Israel, the joys of the redeemed who go there, the promise of prosperity and happiness and the peace of the land.

In chapter 66: 1 God asks: "Where is the House that ye build unto Me?" And later Isaiah declares "a voice of noise from the city, a voice from the Temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to His enemies (66: 6)." When the Third Isaiah stops, something in the way of a beginning was astir to restore the Temple, and some effort on the part of pioneers had started to create housing on the demolished city of Jerusalem. The mood was one of rebuilding, restoration, a faith in the promise of God that His City and House would be erected solidly, and under His Loving Protection. This indeed, was to come to pass, and also the efforts towards righteous living for centuries under the Second Temple.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 71

Received: July 1st, 1965.

HAGGAI URGES THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

I am here, Jesus.

The Third Isaiah had sought to encourage the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple in the same way as his illustrious predecessor, the Second Isaiah: a miracle of God,

through Cyrus, had given the Hebrew people the opportunity to leave Babylonia, land of their exile, and come back to the land granted them by their God, through an “acceptable year of the Lord,” who had forgiven the trespasses of His people and was setting them up as an example to the Gentiles.

However, between 537 BC, when this event took place with the initial return of some of the people, and 520 BC when Haggai, and also Zechariah, spoke out for the rebuilding of the Temple, upheavals over a great area of the East gradually remolded the ideal of the Temple from a purely religious, into a religious-political image. The Temple must be the religious center, not of a small, isolated corner of the Persian empire, but of an independent Hebrew state of Israel.

The reasons for this change in thinking, as in the past, lay in the historical events of the time, wherein Darius Hystapes, the Persian king, had to put down rebellions all over his country, and subjected areas began to entertain thoughts of independence. It is noticeable in Hebrew prophecy that spokesmen for God arise most frequently when political disturbances, such as wars or rebellions in other areas, could be considered as affecting the situation in Israel, or the Hebrew people, whether in their homeland or in exile.

And thus it was that when the rumors of troubles for King Darius Hystapes reached the Hebrews, Haggai made known his appeal for the building of the Temple as the Word of God.

Haggai is the first of the three prophets, which include Zechariah and Malachi, who deals with the period of the restoration of the Temple, so that it became known as the Second, or Zerubbabel's Temple, and lasted for hundreds of years, until, in fact, Herod began the construction of the new Temple of my day in 19 BC, and brought it to completion, without the courts or adjoining buildings, by 9 BC

Between 537 and 520 BC, little or nothing was done, the fifty thousand people who returned to Jerusalem being very much concerned with bringing the land to fertility. They were occupied with establishing a new foothold in the land, which continued to be poor and undesirable as compared to the productive lands of Babylonia, and in maintaining peace with the Samaritans, the people to the north of Judea, with whom some intermarriage was taking place, and who, because of certain questions of integration mainly, which separated them from the Jews, opposed the construction of the Second Temple. They obtained a ruling from the Persian monarch, bringing the work of construction to a halt.

With people impoverished, the difficulties many, frustrations and disappointments emphasizing the unfulfillment of the glorious prophecies of the previous prophets, additional hardships continued to plague them with drought and crop failures. In this soreness of distress, where hindrances from God seemed contrary to the promises of help He had assured them, so that they were in danger of losing their faith in the Lord, Haggai came to them with a message of explanation: God was not with them because His House had not been rebuilt. Let me also say that the extreme orthodox sect of the religion proved a discouraging factor in the will of the people to restore the Temple in that, very meticulous in their arguments, they sought to show that the time for restoration had not yet come.

They based this interpretation on Jeremiah's statement of “seventy years”(Jeremiah 25: 12), which would have brought the earliest year of construction to the year 516 BC But if we consider as the ground for argument, King Jehoiakim's surrender of Jerusalem in 597 BC, and the following deportation of the Hebrew leaders, then the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy becomes the year 527 BC Regardless of which interpretation is correct, I must state that more

important is the will to action and doing what is legitimate in the Sight of God, than sterile subtleties and dissipation of energy in the name of piety. God's Word is eternal, therefore elastic, and covers all the ages of mankind unto the time when mankind may exist no longer on earth, but man must make interpretations that are applicable to and satisfy the new conditions, which constantly change with the generations.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 72

Received: July 1, 1965.

HAGGAI INSTILLS COURAGE AND FAITH IN THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

I am here, Jesus.

Traditional Christians of many, many centuries have allowed their religion to become crystallized into molds no longer useful or satisfactory to the new conditions of life as they have been unfolding in recent times, and many are ready, or will be, inclined to hear the voice of the religion of the New Birth, which I, the Messiah of God, and messenger of the Almighty, am now bringing to earth again for the salvation of mankind.

Haggai was a true prophet because the voice of God told him that the exigencies of the times were more important than was mathematical exactitude, and that the faith and fate of the Jewish pioneers were more precious unto the Lord than numerical approximations, for these they were, and nothing more. And Haggai's insight and his assurance that God was with him brought a great reversal in attitude—a miracle, so to speak—and the Temple was completed within a remarkably short period of three months.

Who, then, was this prophet Haggai, and what did he say that so inspired the disheartened dwellers of Jerusalem? To begin with, Haggai was a young lad who was born in Jerusalem and remembered the Temple in the days before its destruction. He was taken to Babylonia where he was raised as a tiller of the soil, but he was a great lover of the old prophets and a man strong in the faith of the Hebrew religion and in its civilization. When the call was made in 537 BC to return to Jerusalem, Haggai answered the appeal within a few years. Even at that time, a man over fifty years of age, Haggai endured all the hardships of that return to the sterile, wretched land he sought with such earnestness to bring back to productivity. He was not of the priestly class; rather was he of the world of the prophets, seeking spirit and life instead of form and formula. At the same time Haggai was endowed with a sense of order and felt that a leader

under a descendant of David, Zerubbabel by name, would help reestablish the faith and spirituality of the people of Jerusalem. I shall speak of this presently.

The Book of Haggai is short; it contains four exhortations. The first of these urged the people to begin work immediately on the restoration of God's Temple in Jerusalem. This was an appeal that took place in the sixth month (named Elul in the later Hebrew calendar) of Darius' second year as King; therefore, in the autumn of 520 BC On the first day of this month Haggai went to the foundations of the Temple and there spoke to a gathering of people who were accustomed to visit there on the Sabbath and the new moon. The talk was designed to reach the ears of Zerubbabel, son of Shaltiel, governor of Judea, and those of Jeshua, the high priest, whose family dated back to the high priesthood of pre-exilic days. Zerubbabel was, of course, Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah (as found in Ezra 1: 8), grandson of Jehoiakim, the Hebrew king who was taken to Babylonia. Addressing these two as the secular and religious heads of the people, with a faithful audience, he flatly declared in the Name of God that the cause of their impoverishment and difficulties arose from neglect of, and indifference to, rebuilding God's House for the Lord to dwell in. "Is it time for yourselves to dwell in your ceiling houses, while this house lieth waste?" (Haggai 1: 4). God's favor would wait for the restoration of the Temple; the drought and scarcity were the visible manifestations of His displeasure at not being able to have His House in Jerusalem. Three weeks later, the two leaders and the people were cleaning up the debris, gathering wood from the hill- country and the material needed for the work, and undertook the restoration of the Temple, assured by Haggai that the Lord was with them. "I am with you, saith the Lord." (Haggai 1: 13).

In Chapter 2, Haggai contends with another problem. Construction had gone on for about a month and the workers realized that the new Temple would be far inferior to the splendor of Solomon's Temple. A few of the old people still remembered the magnificence of this structure before the destruction sixty-six years before. The discouraged builders needed a new stimulus, and Haggai, emphasizing that the Spirit of God was with them, declared that no fear need be had over lack of magnificence:

For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth . . . and I will shake all nations, and the choicest things of all nations shall come, and I shall fill this house with glory," saith the Lord of Hosts. "Mine is the silver and mine the gold, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Haggai 2: 6 - 8).

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 73

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HAGGAI'S REVELATION OF GOD.

I am here, Jesus.

In the five hundred years or more to the time of my coming as the Messiah, the Temple acquired vast treasures, not through a stripping or despoiling of other nations, as Haggai thought, and so declared in order to infuse his fellowmen with needed confidence and importance, but through patient acquisition of the world's goods. But more vital beyond comparison was Haggai's revelation from God: "The glory of this House shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts; and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Haggai : 2: 9)

The prophecy of Haggai, as far as the Temple's glory was concerned, may be understood in the light of the Maccabean rule, even the institution of Chanukah, and in the fact that the duration of this Temple exceeded that of Solomon's, as well as in the adornments and magnificent additions made by Herod.

Two months later Haggai had the occasion to give his third message—this time one of reproof as well as stimulus for continued action. This one concerns the consideration that uncleanliness is stronger than holiness in its effect upon people and that therefore the uncleanliness that up to the present had characterized the people (through their indifference to the Lord's House for more than three generations) could hardly be atoned for in the short time they had commended the rebuilding of the Temple, especially as the Samaritan influence, a source of unholiness, had been with them so potently. This comparison of a priestly nature was used to effectively silence the complaints of those who failed to see an immediate improvement in conditions after work on the Temple had begun.

Haggai affirms that the next harvest would be a plentiful one, thanks to the Lord's reward for His people now that they had been touched to care about His Temple. The last message, spoken the same day as the third, predicts the "shaking of the heavens and the earth, and the overthrow of the nations," and the choosing of Zerubbabel as the servant of the Lord. There are those who have taken this reference to mean that God considered Zerubbabel His Messiah. Although this is the attitude of Zechariah, whom I shall discuss soon, this, however, is not the meaning. Rather, the prophecy is to the overthrow of the Persian Empire, which took place some thirty-four years later, and the nullification of Jeremiah's prophecy against the progeny of Jehoiakim, whose grandson, as I have mentioned, was this same Zerubbabel.

Jeremiah had declared of Jehoiakim, "Write ye this man childless. . . for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David." (Jeremiah 22: 30) The ruler's sincere repentance, however, had in time averted the fulfillment of the evil; and Zerubbabel would in time ascend to a high station among the Hebrew people. Haggai was much in sympathy with Zerubbabel and was glad to prophesy a return to power of the king's grandson, for the man's sake and for the sake of Israel. Eventually, however, he was forced to withdraw as a result of opposing forces.

When we look back at the work of Haggai, there are two aspects which seem most dominant: (1) his ability to infuse faith and stir men to action and (2) his insight into the problem of a fixed law to cover thousands of years. He rightly felt that laws dealing with God were immutable: love for God, as in the Ten Commandments, remained untouchable. But since he

understood that material conditions change, he advocated amendments in the law to meet those changes, without lessening their spirit or intent.

This conception of a fixed versus pliant interpretation of the Hebrew law caused a cleavage in the unity of the people, as one may see in the divergent views of the Sadducees, the conservatives, and the Pharisees, or moderates, who believed in an oral law to supplement and modernize the old statutes, which were being crystallized into something unworkable, or causing frustrations and burdens for those who sought to adhere to them. For example, when Moses gave the Ten Commandments, he declared against adultery by married women, because the latter were considered the chattel of their husbands, and the intent was that such property used by someone else constituted a crime against the owner of this property. This was the original meaning of the Seventh Commandment, and it was only many centuries later that the higher view that adultery was a violation against one's vows of love and fidelity developed to supersede the earlier economic attitude towards women.

In more recent days where this Commandment is broken, the violation is often not so much in breaking of this statute as in the insincere marriage to one whom the violator did not really love, but married for other motives. And thus, even today, adultery has evolved from an economic crime, punishable with death, to a religious one characterized by divorce (instead of pardon and reconciliation, as I advocate) and to an attack against a marriage institution which does not safeguard against loveless unions, or unions for sex expression only, or other unworthy reasons. Here then is one example of how laws and attitudes towards them have changed with the passing of time and the realization that they cannot be set in a rigid mold.

When I came to earth and preached in the Holy Land, I had discussions of this nature with opponents of the elastic concept of law, and some of these were Pharisees who argued not in the vicious or venomous vein that one reads in the New Testament, but in the atmosphere that so often prevails where the views held are very precious and important to each. Thus, I healed on the Sabbath and even helped a mule out of a hole, to the consternation of those who set their store by rigid rules, whereas I contended that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, putting life first, as God intended. Thus you see that, in so doing, I was not going outside Hebrew law, as some commentators believe, or even bringing a new, God-given revelation to mankind, as some Christians would like to think, but I was following, and agreeing with, the insight of Haggai, prime mover in the rebuilding of the Temple and Hebrew prophet *par excellence*. And I was also in agreement with a great number of the Pharisaic membership, where views of a liberal interpretation of the laws made of me a sympathizer of their outlook. This insight of Haggai, unfortunately, is not too clearly discernible by the short tracts now available in the Old Testament and it has not been given the recognition which its vital significance merits. But I am glad, in closing, to bring this to the attention of all who may read these sermons on Haggai.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 74

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ZECHARIAH, THE DREAMER.

I am here, Jesus.

The name of Zechariah is usually associated with Haggai, in that two months after the latter spoke forth for the rebuilding of the Temple, the former also made his appeal for the same purpose. But Zechariah, unlike Haggai, was a young man when his call to prophecy came, and his method, approach and attitudes are very dissimilar. His prophecies, accompanied by progress in the work on the Temple until completion, look forward to the realization of great days for the Jewish people and their religion of love for God and purity of soul.

Zechariah was born in exile, the son of Berechiah, a priest and grandson of Iddo who had some reputation as a seer or prophet himself, as well as priest. His name, meaning Jehovah's Memorial, was well suited to this young man: It meant recalling God's Demands and Requisites as well as seeking to know His Plans through visions similar to those of Ezekiel.

Zechariah was not interested in the dark days of Israel's past. He felt that with Jews once more in the Holy Land of Israel and in Jerusalem—a miracle of God—the future would be bright and resplendent. Therefore, Zechariah dreamed dreams in the night. These dreams of the prophet are of great significance in understanding the Apocalyptic literature of later writers, like Daniel, centuries later. These visions are personal in nature, which the prophets interpret as images containing the messages which God has designed to send in this fashion. For the prophet, they express God's Truths.

It is interesting to observe, however that, while visions were also seen by earlier prophets, God Himself was the speaker. There was no need of an intermediary between the Lord and His medium of expression. But with Zechariah, the Lord God Himself does not enter; it is rather through a divine messenger or angel that Zechariah is able to obtain the meaning of the visions he receives. In fact, in all the visions of the prophet, there is present an angel who tells him what his visions represent.

What, then, did these visions from God tell Zechariah and in what form were they transmitted to him? I shall go into some detail with these visions, a series of eight, and then explain what they meant for the Jewish people. Vision one might be called “among the myrtle trees.” The prophet is in a valley, in which the night seems all the darker because of the foliage. There comes the noise of horses' hooves, but despite the dark night, a red horse and his rider can be distinguished. He stops before the prophet. As leader, he is an angel and he has come to earth to see what conditions there are like. He declares all the world is at peace, and Zechariah is given the message that the Lord shall comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.

In the second vision, four horns, enemies of Jerusalem, are beaten down by four carpenters: hence the day of peace and rest for Judah shall come.

The third vision, the man with the measuring line, indicates that Jerusalem has outgrown her walls, and that the safety of the city lies in her Protector, the Lord.

The fourth vision, in which the accused is Joshua, the high priest, takes one to the purely contemporary scene, wherein Haggai, whom I have reviewed in previous messages, advocated the supremacy of the religious element in Jerusalem and Zechariah felt strongly for Zerubbabel, in a frank desire for a nationalist community, a free nation independent of Persia and with an emphasis on the political. While the prophet here was not in favor of Joshua, and in the vision has him brought up for trial, accused by Satan, and dressed in filthy garments, he nevertheless sought an understanding whereby Joshua would limit himself to religious affairs and permit Zerubbabel to have a free rein as leader of the Hebrew nation. The Persians, however, did not permit Zerubbabel to continue as political leader, fearing an uprising, and they removed him from leadership.

In the fifth vision, however, Zechariah sought to assure Joshua of his support as a religious figure. As a matter of fact the next vision is purely religious. From the olive trees, which stand close to a seven-branched golden candlestick or House of God, oil is passed from candlestick to a lamp, which represents God's Grace to the restored Hebrew nation. God's Temple will be built and the ecclesiastical services maintained. Again, the prophet makes mention of Zerubbabel, for the angel who speaks in the dream says:

This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying: Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain and he shall bring forth the top stone (complete the building) with shouting of "Grace, grace, unto it"(Zechariah 4: 6 - 7).

The prophet meant that God's favor of Zerubbabel would enable the latter to finish the Temple, and that the restored Hebrew nation would be fed by God's Spirit, just as the seven-branched candlestick would be fed by the miraculous olive trees supplying the oil for the lamps. Many commentators have had difficulty with the verse "even they shall see with joy the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, even those seven, which are the eyes of the Lord, that run to and fro through the whole earth" (4: 10). The seven refer to the lamps or candles on the candlestick. The prophet also meant that the troubles which were hindering the Temple from being completed, such as the continued opposition of the Samaritans, and the interference of the Persian Satrap, would not deter the completion of the Temple, as the zeal of the Lord would make this a certainty. This prophecy was, of course, fulfilled, and the Temple continued to flourish for some 580 years or so, supplying the Hebrew people with their inspiration and rules for righteous living and love of God, despite the lack of a national ruler in the secular sense, and the difficulties that mounted ever higher as Persia, Greece, and the Roman Empire used Israel as their pawn in their ruthless struggles and crushing power politics.

It should be remembered that what has always kept Judaism alive was the Spirit of God, and the ideals of love to God and fellowman, a sense of righteousness, reverence for life and the rights of others, and an intense faith in the Lord. The vitality of Judaism lies in its spiritual and moral values, not in the power of its warriors, size of its army, or extension of territory.

Now to the sixth vision. “The Flying Roll,” or huge scroll containing invectives against thieves and dishonest persons, is a warning to the people of Jerusalem not to enter into the depicted ways of the wicked. Idolatry is depicted in the vision of the ephah, or eight-gallon measure, in which a woman, who represents sin, is sitting. This woman will be banished from Israel and transferred to the land of Shinar: the old Hebrew name for Babylon. This is the seventh vision.

The last vision is that of the four chariots, each drawn by horses of different colors symbolizing the various empires which had in the past caused, or in the future, was to have caused injury to Israel. These chariots, dominating and harnessing the horses, indicate that God's agents have kept, and in the future (as in the case of Rome) will keep these great empires within bounds and destroy them. The chariots had already accomplished their mission of destruction on Babylon. Persia and Egypt are now chafing at the divine reins; only Rome is still to be accounted for.

Jesus of the Bible
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SERMON 75

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ZECHARIAH RECEIVES A COMMAND FROM GOD HIMSELF.

I am here, Jesus.

In Chapter 6: 9 – 15, Zechariah received a Command from God Himself (and not from angels). Here the prophet was no longer in a visionary state: it was morning. A delegation of Jews still in captivity in Babylon had arrived in Jerusalem bearing gold and silver as an offering in the work of restoring the Temple. The prophet was ordered to go that same day to the house of Josiah, the son of Zephariah, where the metal was deposited, and make two crowns: one of silver for Josiah, the high priest, and the other, of gold, for Zerubbabel. The prophet was ordered to tell the high priest:

Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying: Behold, a man whose name is the Shoot, and who shall shoot up out of his place, and build the Temple of the Lord; even he shall build the Temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and there shall be a priest before his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. . . as a memorial in the Temple of the Lord. And they that are far off shall come and

build in the Temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto you. And it shall come to pass, if ye will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God. (Zechariah 6: 12 – 15)

Zechariah, it should be mentioned now, was an artisan, a worker in metals, and he was very capable of carrying out God's Commands with respect to the two crowns. He completed them in the presence of Josiah and the delegation of three, and after the coronation ceremonies, they were hung by golden chains in the roof of the Temple porch.

The Shoot, of course, was Zerubbabel, and the meaning was a reference to the prophet's interpretation of the Messiah at that period in Israel's history. He was to be king of an independent nation, and the religious affairs were to be in the hands of a high priest. As you know, of course, this was not to take place, as the Persians had Zerubbabel removed from political power, and Israel was not to become an independent nation until the time of the Maccabean struggle more than three hundred years later. In addition, Zechariah's vision of the Messiah was still that of a material ruler, interested primarily in restoration, without the soul or spiritual qualities that had characterized David, the King, and, with the land continuing to be ruled by foreign powers, with the high priests as local governors, the conception of the Messiah, the ideal of the people, remained focused upon the restoration of the Hebrew nation with the Messiah as sovereign.

On the fourth day of the ninth month, or Chislev (your December-January), in the year 518 BC, an inquiry was made as to whether the day commemorating the fall of the Temple should be retained as a holiday. As to this question, which arose when a delegation from Babylon was sent for a determination, it was referred to Zechariah in the belief that the prophet could obtain an answer from the Lord or His angels. Zechariah stated that the people had not fasted on that day nor on the day which commemorated the assassination of Gedaliah, the governor of Jerusalem. However, declared the prophet, the Lord was not concerned with fasting, but with doing what is right in His sight. What had caused the plight of the Hebrews in former times was exactly this lack of righteous living, which had been preached by earlier prophets and fallen on deaf ears. Evildoing had reached its harvest. But now that punishment had resulted from the work of their hands, God was eager to bring about restoration and a binding up of wounds. Jerusalem shall become the "City of Truth" and the Temple area should be the "holy mountain." Hence the Temple should be completed by all means and Jerusalem was to become a city of youth and laughter. Truth and peace should be the watchword, and ethical living and righteousness the laws to be obeyed and revered. Thus would the days of fasting and gloom be converted into a time of happiness and festivals. And thus would the Hebrews be restored to the Favor of the Lord and be the models for all mankind. All peoples would respect them and acknowledge the holiness of their religion and the goodness of their humanity:

Thus saith Yahweh of Hosts: It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come peoples, and the inhabitants of great cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us go speedily to entreat the favor of Yahweh, and to seek Yahweh of hosts; I will go also." Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Yahweh of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of Yahweh. Thus saith Yahweh of hosts; "In those days it shall come to pass, that

ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations. They shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (Zechariah 8: 20 - 23)

A higher vision of Judaism, based on the righteousness which the Lord demands of His people, and which meant recognition for the Jew and his humanity by other peoples, can hardly be found in the Bible. This is expressed with a love and a yearning that make all devout Jews feel a tug at their hearts and seek the Lord, and know that He is with them.

Now let me return to Zechariah's prophecy. When I came to earth to live and preach in the Holy Land, I did not come fasting, as it has been recorded of me in the New Testament, but I came eating and drinking, as did my followers. I felt, basically, that God was not interested in what I put into my stomach as food or drink, but rather He was concerned with what came out of my mouth, the expressions that came from the heart indicating the condition of the soul. In short, God is interested in the ethical conduct and in the morals that guide the individual in his paths through the mortal life, and, for the people of the New Birth, the Love that burns in the hearts of those who know me as Jesus of the Bible, their elder brother, and Master of the Celestial Heavens— people whose conduct is conditioned by the Divine Love in their hearts, and not by rites and ceremonies. And as I told guests at the table in the house of my father, Joseph (called Alphaeus in the New Testament to disguise the fact that I had a real father), the followers of John, the Baptist, and the members of the Pharisees used to fast because they were conscious of sin in that they had only the inadequate natural love to combat it, whereas I came with a soul impervious to sin due to the Love therein, and I taught my disciples Divine Love through prayer to the Father and a Divine Soul through His Love, and a solid protection against worldly sin and evil like unto a high battlement watched over by the zeal of the Lord Himself. I also taught prayer for the Love burning in my own soul, my mission on earth as the Messiah of God.

I did not come to dispute or violate the traditions of Judaism, as has been claimed in some circles, but adhered to the Hebrew prophecy as laid down by Zechariah, to the effect, let me repeat, that God was not concerned with fasting, but in doing righteousness, which all the prophets of Israel had proclaimed. I was therefore conforming to the revelations of the prophets, and well within the laws of Israel. My telling disciples and hearers of the presence of the bridegroom simply meant the presence of the Messiah, and the Presence of God on earth through the Love in my heart, and the need for happiness and joy in Its presence as long as I was on earth. I may speak more on this when I discuss the parables found in the New Testament.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.

SERMON 76

Received: January 4, 1966.

JESUS, WHEN ON EARTH, WAS IMPRESSED BY ZECHARIAH'S WRITTINGS.

I am here, Jesus.

With the ninth chapter of Zechariah it is necessary to pause and make some comments. The contents of the last six chapters have nothing in common, as far as subject matter is concerned, with the preceding ones, and subsequently many commentators of Old Testament prophets feel that a second Zechariah wrote them. This, however, is a case wherein the same person penned all the chapters, regardless of the completely new material introduced; rather, we find the same visionary and the same optimist, on a larger and more grandiose scale.

Some 25 years elapse before Zechariah writes his remaining chapters. The Temple was restored in 516 BC, and all seemed peaceful; yet in 490 BC there takes place the battle of Marathon and 10 years later the Greeks defeat the Persians in the naval battle of Salamis. Hence Zechariah, now a middle aged man, sees in these historical events a sign to again take up the pen of prophecy and hearken to the voice of the Lord. Now he is no longer interested in the Temple, an accomplished fact, but in the fate of the Jews and Jerusalem if Persia were to be conquered by the Greeks, as proved to be the case when Alexander, the Great, appeared on the scene about 150 years later. Zechariah's conclusion is that now that Israel, the Holy Land, is again in the possession of the Jews, any assault by the Greeks or a combination of nations against Jerusalem must this time fail, even if God Himself had to come down from heaven and fight, standing on His Holy Mountain, to save his people from destruction. His voice brought the Hebrews back from exile in Babylonia; His zeal would, if necessary, bring victory to His people this time, if attacked. Hence Jews must look forward to the future with confidence, regardless of the upheavals wrought among the heathen nations; the threat of Greece would fade, Jerusalem would become the Temple City of the entire world to which peoples from everywhere would come to worship, and in that future day "the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall the Lord be One, and His Name One." (Zechariah 14: 9)

When on earth in Palestine, I was very much interested in Zechariah's writing, not only because of the faith in the Lord's Love and protection of His people, but because of the figure of the Messiah which he introduced as visions. This recourse to Messiahship occurs as early as Chapter 9: 9 and 10, which are very much celebrated in religious circles:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion,
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem;
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee:
He is just and mercifully loving;¹
Lowly, and riding upon an ass,
Even upon a colt, the foal of an ass.

¹ Not "Triumphant and victorious," as given in translations. The real meaning of "Tzaddik" is just, and the word "nosha" does not mean "victorious," but the "recipient of salvation."

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,²
And the horse from Jerusalem,
And the battle bow shall be cut off.
And he shall speak peace unto the nations;
And his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
And from the river to the ends of the earth.

Now there can be no doubt about the new dimension in Israel's conception of the Messiah. Here he is no longer the conventional ruler anointed of God through the priesthood; the Messiah, whom Zechariah had taken to be Zerubbabel, had failed to survive the opposition of the Persians, and one may say the priesthood as well, in that this organization feared curtailment of its powers by a native secular power. Zechariah now saw that the Messiah to come must be, to be sure, a human being, but possessed of transcendent spiritual qualities of humility and love. In addition, Zechariah saw that the Messiah of God would have not only Israel at heart, but all humanity.

Here, then, was a concept of the Messiah that went beyond a conventional regal figure, one that was endowed with a human spirit and a breadth that gave the meaning of the term a grandeur heretofore unknown. The Messiah was to bring peace to the worn-torn world through his care, his mercy, his love. I was very much impressed by these verses in Zechariah, and the Love in my heart told me that this concept of the Messiah was more nearly in accord with what God had willed for His Christ. And when I set out for Jerusalem, I chose to enter the city exactly in the manner described in the lines I have just quoted; I rode at the head of my followers mounted on an ass. You see that the prophets of Israel were very important to me in my intellectual formation as the Messiah promised the Hebrew people.

But if Zechariah saw the vision of the Messiah as God's Will for love and peace, yet he saw struggle and invasion all about him. He senses that the Greeks will take the place of the Persians and attack Asia Minor and the Middle East. This they had done in centuries gone by, when the Greeks had destroyed Troy, and the Philistines had invaded Israel. Now new wars were in the offing. The Persians were now in battle with the Greeks, but Zechariah foresaw mighty land attacks. As a matter of fact, these took place much later in the days of Alexander, the Great. Zechariah was therefore afraid of warfare against Jerusalem, even to the extent where Judah, the land surrounding the city, would feel the brunt of the invasion and attack the enemy in turn. Here Zechariah wished to imbue his hearers with a sense of security. God would fight for them now, as He had not done in the defense against Babylonia. Before, He had punished; now, He would redeem:

In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem;
And he that stumbleth among them at that day shall be as David {so valiant and
mighty a warrior shall he be}.
And the house of David shall be as a godlike being,
As the angel of the Lord before them.
And it shall come to pass that I will set myself to destroy

² The Euphrates.

All the nations {if their guilt so warrants their destruction}
That come against Jerusalem:

And I will pour upon the House of David,
And upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem
The spirit of grace and supplication, {yea,
The spirit of salvation and prayer}
And they shall look upon him whom they have pierced,
And they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only
son. . . (Zechariah 12: 8 - 10).

Now this is a prophecy attributed to the Father Himself, relative to a defense of Jerusalem; He would inspire courage and bravery in the Hebrew soldiers, but he would also pour out His Spirit upon the people. I have asked Zechariah when this took place, or was to take place, and who was the person mourned for whom they had thrust through, and Zechariah told me he had been inspired by a vision such as he had received in earlier prophecies, and could only say that this was a matter of interpretation. He did say, however, that he knew of no one in the spirit world who had come forth to proclaim himself to be that person, not even King Josiah, who was killed by Pharaoh Necho at Meggido, and thought this referred to the Messiah, son of Joseph, who was to die violently in the performance of his mission, according to an old Hebrew tradition. I have thought that this could refer to the assassination of Gedaliah, the governor of Jerusalem at the time it was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, by members of the Hebrew royal house. A day of national mourning was set up to remember this horrible deed, and his death was deeply felt and grieved. I cannot adhere to the general Jewish interpretation that the martyr referred to were the Jewish soldiers fallen before the heathen onslaughts, but the Talmud declares (Sukkah, 52A), like Zechariah, that this refers to the Messiah and his untimely death. Of course the New Testament considers the prophecy as having been fulfilled by my death outside Jerusalem. If this is true, then the prophecy is astounding, but I am reluctant to believe that the evidence is strong enough to be considered convincing. At the same time, when I realized I was the Messiah of God, I knew that my road in preaching salvation through God's Love must inevitably incur the hostility of those whose concept of Judaism brooked no further development, as well as the enmity of high placed officials whose positions could be abolished by acceptance of the "good news," and persecution from the Roman authorities in the name of revolt against the existing order, whose duty it was to maintain.

Furthermore, the beginning of Chapter 13 refers to a fountain of waters in Jerusalem: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the House of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for purification and for sprinkling, for sin and for uncleanness." (Zechariah 13: 1)

Since the only stream in Jerusalem is the Kidron Brook, the reference here was to Ezekiel's vision of waters flowing from the Temple (Ezekiel 47: 1) and was prophetic in meaning. In the time of my coming, this fountain for the House of David and the people of Jerusalem could have no meaning in a physical sense for ablutions, but only in the sense of the out-flowing of God's Divine Love to me as His Messiah and to the people who should listen to my preaching of God's new salvation through His Love, and pray and obtain It as I exhorted them to do, and to those in the spirit world who should follow my preaching, whatever their

abode and condition of soul. Thus I was very much alive to the writings of Zechariah, and I understood considerably about my mission as the Christ through this prophet of Israel receiving the word of God centuries before my coming.

Jesus of the Bible
and
Master of the Celestial Heavens.