

THE WONDERFUL SAVIOUR

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6.

The ancient world boasted of its seven wonders, including the Great Wall of China, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Pyramids of Egypt. The modern world also boasts of its wonders. The "wonderful" in mind and matter confronts us at every turn. You may add the wonders of both the ancient and the modern worlds together, and these combined cannot equal the wonder of Jesus Christ, to Whom our text refers.

In this announcement, which is the gospel according to Isaiah, we have not only a birth, but also a gift. This wonderful Saviour, of Whom Isaiah speaks, is not the production of our race, but the gift of heaven. As we ponder His character, it will kindle our admiration for Him and increase our devotion to Him.

God has been gracious and good to each of us. For each of us He has provided: ---

1. A wonderful world.

Proof that this world is wonderful is indeed abundant when we take note of the chirping of the various kinds of birds just outside our bedroom windows at the break of day, the fragrance of the many beautiful flowers wafted in on the morning breeze, the fleecy clouds changing from one color to another in the early dawn. Then there are the fertile valleys stretching far in the distance with all their excellent crops, and the hundreds of beautiful hills with the thousands of cattle grazing upon them. The quiet lakes, the rippling rills, the rushing rivers, the restless seas, the mighty forests, the towering mountains, the glorious sunset, the silvery moon, the twinkling stars--all speak to us of the power and goodness of God which are manifested for our good and His glory.

2. A wonderful age.

This age is one in which the slow and laborious process of hand manufacture has given way to the mighty wheels of industry driven by steam and electricity. We are living in a day when the genius of science and the knowledge of man have produced for us carriages that can run without horses, refrigerators that can cool without ice, fruit that can grow without seed, telephones over which you can talk without wires, and typewriters on which you can write without making any noise. We are living in an age of tremendous outward development, of vast activities, of multiplied scientific discoveries, of annihilated distances and of general education. We now manufacture by the thousands and millions instead of by the dozens. There has been such an annihilation of distance that a hundred miles is not any more to us than two city blocks was to our grandfathers. The ocean has become a mere inland lake; the radio has brought, as it were, the whole earth to our door. It took Magellan years to circumnavigate the world but Dr. Hugo Eckener did it in a week. So this is a new age of scientific discovery and progress and year by year God is unfolding to us more and more of His resources and placing them at our service.

3. A wonderful Saviour.

This is the best blessing of all the blessings that God has provided for us. I have chosen the prophetic verse of Isaiah 9:6 "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." as a text for this message because it so comprehensively expressed the infinite attributes of Him whom we delight to call THE WONDERFUL SAVIOUR. There is but one Being in the universe to whom these words can be applied, namely, Christ. Perhaps this text is one of the most wonderful verses in all the Bible because at its beginning there is found an infant in its mother's

arms, while at its close there is found the Almighty God who fashioned the universe. The faculty of wonder is natural to man. There are three things which naturally evoke wonder. The first is novelty. We all wonder at what is absolutely new. Another source of wonder is the beautiful. We are so made, that we cannot but respond to the beautiful as the harp strings respond to the player. But the highest cause of wonder is the sublime story of some great heroic deed, something unparalleled in bravery or in sacrifice, which not only stirs and interests our minds; but also elevates our souls, which lifts them higher and impels them to great and glorious deeds. It is Christ who stimulates this last kind of wonder. If there is something wonderful in any child as its mother no doubt would fondly say is true, it was especially true with the child Christ Jesus. When we think of the lowliness of His origin, and remember how wonderful He was in His development, in His life--which life is chiefly comprehended in this monograph, "He went about doing good.", in His self-restraint, in His mastery over the forces of nature, in His teachings, in His doings, in His death, in His resurrection, in His ascension, in His intercession, and in His second coming,--we cannot but feel the truth of the prophecy of our text made by Isaiah at least twenty-six hundred years ago.

However, we will not speak primarily of any of these wonderful things in connection with the Saviour but as we speak of THE WONDERFUL SAVIOUR He will fill us with wonder as we consider His person, His purpose, His power and His possessions. Therefore, our discussion must center on these four points.

I. Christ is Wonderful in His Person.

For a description of His person we turn to Matthew 16:12-16 where we are told that "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Here He is represented as: ---

1. The Son of God.

We know this from what God said at the baptism of Jesus as the Father spoke from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17. As the Son of God, John's Gospel represents Him as: ---

(1) Living with the Father.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1. This verse teaches His eternity, His equality and His deity.

(2) Loved by the Father.

"For Thou lovest Me before the foundation of the world." John 17:24. Jesus made this statement when He was praying to the Father on behalf of all believers.

(3) Laboring for the Father.

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." John 4:34. This verse shows us that Christ's purpose in this world was matchlessly important, essentially pre-eminent and cardinally supreme.

2. The Son of Man.

Jesus used this expression in referring to Himself in Matthew 16:13. Isaiah in his wonderful fifty-third chapter gives us a marvelous picture of the Son of Man and in it he represents Him as: ---

- (1) The Man of Sorrows.
"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Verse 3.
- (2) The Man of Suffering.
"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Verse 5.
- (3) The Man of Silence.
"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." Verse 7.

The Son of God thus became the Son of Man in order that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." John 1:12. He was the Son of God. He was the Son of Man. And both in one. He was so human He got tired; He was so Divine He said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." He was so human He got hungry; He was so Divine He fed thousands with a lad's lunch. He was so human He got thirsty; He was so Divine He walked on the storm-tossed sea--so Divine He said to the woman at the well; "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." He was so human He had to sleep; He was so Divine He arose from sleep and stilled the raging tempest. He was so human He got lonely and was pained at the slowness of human recognition; He was so Divine that He could say, "The Father hath not left Me alone." He was so human He accepted a village girl's invitation to her wedding; He was so Divine that at this wedding He changed water into wine. He was so human He wept; He was so Divine He stood at the grave where He wept and raised the dead brother and gave him back to the empty arms and aching hearts of the sisters. This Divine-human person is Jesus of Nazareth--literature's loftiest ideal, philosophy's highest personality, criticism's supremest problem, theology's fundamental doctrine and spiritual religion's cardinal necessity.

II. Christ is Wonderful in His Purpose.

It appears to me that His purpose was three-fold, namely: ---

1. The Revelation of God to Man.
He said, "I and My Father are one. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also." He was God manifest in the flesh. If He had just told about God He could not have impressed the world more than the prophets before Him for that is what they did. But He was Himself what He came to reveal or make known to man, God. He revealed the infinite love of God for the sinner and His hatred for his sins.
2. The Redemption of Man from Sin.
Sin is no idle fancy for picnic conversation; no innocent hallucination which clowns use to amuse the crowds; no mild case of measles which can be easily cured; or no light picture of an artist's dream. Sin is a spot one cannot erase, a disease one cannot cure, a burden one cannot remove, a bondage one cannot escape, a cord one cannot sever, an idol one cannot dethrone, a fiend that is dragging man down the sloping stairway to a region of eternal flames in the prison house of outer darkness. Sin is an opiate in the will, a frenzy in the imagination, a madness in the brain, a poison in the heart, the darkest fact in the universe, the most fearful of all realities--God's enemy and man's destroyer.

The only hope that man can have of redemption from sin is in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

3. The Reconciliation of Man to God.

Not only did Christ come to reveal God to man and redeem man from sin but He also came to bring man into his right or proper relationship to God. The most urgent and vital need of mankind today is reconciliation to God. The very word "reconciliation" is a beautiful and joyous word. The experience of reconciliation to God is the most momentous transaction in the life of any man. It is with this three-fold purpose that our wonderful Saviour came into the world and gave His life on the cross.

III. Christ is Wonderful in His Power.

His wonderful power is manifest in His ability: ---

1. To Save.

(1) From sin's penalty.

Death, not only of the body but also of the soul, is the penalty of sin. Every sinner will have to bear that penalty unless he finds in Jesus his personal Saviour. Jesus has borne that penalty for him. There is no necessity for him to bear it himself if only he will come to Christ and receive Him as Saviour. The debt is paid, and we can have perfect, instant forgiveness if we come to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. He saves from sin's penalty at our conversion.

(2) From sin's power.

There is release for every one of us from the indwelling power of sin, if only we will claim it through the finished work of Jesus Christ, by the power of His precious shed blood. He will save us from the power of sin in our daily lives if only we will look to Him and trust Him and possess the possessions that we have in Him.

(3) From sin's presence.

This will be when Jesus comes and takes us out of this world of sin to be with Himself forever. When we reach that other life and world there will be no more sin, and the work of Jesus will then be completed. He will have saved us absolutely from sin's penalty, from sin's power, from sin's presence, and that forevermore.

2. To Sustain.

He can and does sustain us in the midst of our: ---

(1) Toils.

(2) Temptations.

(3) Trials.

3. To Supervise.

(1) Our ways.

(2) Our words.

(3) Our works.

When He saves, sustains, and supervises us then we have the power to live

a. A life of purity.

b. A life of progress.

c. A life of praise.

IV. Christ is Wonderful in His Possessions.

Out of all the many things that He possesses I have time to mention only three, namely:

1. His Huge Heart to Love Us.

His heart of love was so large and His love was so far-reaching that He died not merely for His family and His bosom friends but His love was so great that He died for strangers and even enemies. We often afflict Him with our griefs and troubles and pile on Him our burdens but because of His great love for us, He is always ready to lift us up, He is always ready to help us when others are trying to push us down. While here in the flesh He gave to blind men sight, to deaf men keen ears, to dumb men new tongues, to crippled men new limbs, to crazy men reason, to lepers cleansing, to the sick healing, to the dead new life. Only One with a great heart of love would do the like. He constantly loves us and does so many things for us every day.

2. His Holy Word to Guide Us.

For right guidance the Bible is a Book above and beyond all books as a river is beyond a rill in reach, as the sun is above and beyond a tallow dip in brightness, as Niagara is above and beyond the mill pond in power, as the oak is above and beyond the roadside weed in majesty, as the wings of an eagle are above and beyond the wings of a sparrow in strength, as a tree is beyond a twig in fruit-bearing. His Word is the mightiest, the loveliest and the best of all books to guide us in our glooms, to prompt us in our perplexities, to help us in our hazards, to direct us in our doubts, and to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathway. His Word should be in our homes, our hands, our heads and our habits.

3. His Heavenly Home to Receive Us.

Many of us have happy Christian homes in which we live and enjoy the fellowship we have one with another there. Many of us also have church homes where we commune with God and fellowship with one another. We delight to return to each of these homes and happy are the meetings that we have in each of these homes. But far better than either of these homes is the heavenly home which our wonderful Saviour has prepared for us and into which some day He is going to receive us.

A small boy sat quietly in a seat of the day coach on a train running between two of our western cities. It was a hot, dusty day, very uncomfortable for traveling and that particular ride was very uninteresting. But the little fellow sat patiently watching the fields and fences hurrying by, until a motherly old lady, leaning forward, asked sympathetically, "Aren't you tired of the long ride and the dust and the heat dear?" The lad looked up brightly, and replied with a smile, "Yes, ma'am, a little. But I don't mind it much, because my father is going to meet me when I get to the end of it." What a beautiful thought it is that when life seems hard, wearisome and monotonous, as it sometimes does, we can look forward hopefully and trustingly, and like the lonely little lad, "not mind it much," because our Father, too, will be waiting to meet us and receive us at our journey's end.

"When I come to the end of the long, long road;
To the land of eternity.
I'll stand in the glorious light of God,
And the face of my Lord I'll see."

When He receives us into that wonderful home He has prepared for us it will mean for us: ---

1. A rest from our labours.
2. A reward for our service.
3. A residence with the Lord.
4. A reunion with all the redeemed.