

Christ is Victor

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“Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end”

The Christmas season is here once again. Round the world [the] Christmas season is looked upon as a time for celebration. Some do it by drinking, others by dancing through the night and some others may just engage in a splurge of buying. But what is the reason behind the season? It is Christ Jesus who came into the world to save sinners. If you take that reason out, if you take the person of Jesus Christ out, then there is no sense in our celebration. It becomes like any heathen festival. Today, unfortunately, Christmas has become like a heathen festival in the sense that people do not make the babe of Christmas happy.

If you want to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, the first factor in the celebration is the presence of Jesus. The second factor would be to make Him happy. To worship Him. To kiss His feet which were pierced with nails for our salvation. Now if we don't do that, there is no real Christmas. You may have all the celebrations, all the lights, all the food, all the clothing and all the rest of the paraphernalia, but it amounts to a senseless celebration.

“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 ” (Isaiah 9:2). How amazing! Darkness. Today our world appears to be in gross darkness. Fear everywhere. Alarms, wild alarms everywhere. Everybody, most of all the important people, seem to be frightened for their lives and their own security. Even the pedestrian on the street gets shot for no reason but that there is a little money in his pocket. He is robbed or mugged, and people are afraid. Everywhere there is gross darkness of fear. And into the midst of this, you bring the Lord Jesus. He brings

light and deliverance. So we are told in the sixth verse, “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... the Prince of Peace...”

What a prophecy! The Prince of Peace has come. And yet there is so much of unrest. Why? We will not bring Jesus in. Whether it is the heart, or the family or the country, we reject Him without a cause. We hate Him without a cause. We would rather have the mythological figures and not the Saviour, the Son of God who was manifested and took the form of man to be born into the world, to live a sinless life and to offer a sinless sacrifice for our sins.

Christmas leads us to the cross. The hardest heart is softened at the cross of Jesus. You just turn and look at the spotless Saviour hanging there on the cross and you are melted. If you and I could pull ourselves up by our boot laces, if you and I by yoga or some other means could completely bring this body under our control and live a perfect life, a holy life, we don't need a Saviour. You may have practised all the systems of self-reformation, but have you arrived at purity? Have you arrived at love? Have you found peace?

Don't tell me you are still labouring hard, running helter-skelter, turning over the pages of old tomes and looking into all kinds of philosophies. “Come on,” the Lord Jesus says, “they that seek Me will find rest.”

“Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.” This is not a government enforcing something with armies, guns and bullets. It is Christ the Saviour of the world standing before you in His peerless power and the might of His love, saying, “You belong to me, I purchased you, I died and shed my blood for you, you are Mine. I want to fill your life with peace and make you a blessing.”

This government is increasing every day in many hearts and I see it happening in many parts of the world. I praise God. But it is not some gimmick. It is not some healing meeting where people say, “Eh, I've been healed.” Healing should be first inside and then it works outside. But all

that people go for is some kind of relief from their symptoms. But Jesus does not deal with mere symptoms. He deals with the cause. You have an evil heart. You have a dirty conscience. You need to be cleansed. So He says, “My blood has been shed for you. I'll cleanse you. Come unto Me. I'll give you a new heart and My peace in it.”

Let His government of peace come into your life. Don't we need our families to be governed by this peace? Don't we need our hearts to be governed by this peace? Yes, we do. May the Lord bless you and make this a time when there is meaningful celebration. “Christ has come into my heart. He is born into my life. I have yielded myself to Him. So this is a true Christmas to me,” you should be able to say. May God bless you!

— Joshua Daniel

“Sun of righteousness”

Malachi 4:2-6. “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall” (Malachi 4:2).

Christ is compared to the Sun of righteousness. The sun in our physical world gives us light and warmth. This sun can kill disease germs also when its rays reach the earth at a certain intensity. Christ came with spiritual warmth to give us spiritual healing. He brought spiritual light to deliver us from spiritual darkness. The physical sun is responsible for all the energy on the earth. The sun's energy is stored up in oil, coal and wood and in the elevated positions of heavy things. So also whatever spiritual light or illumination you find on earth is due to Christ the Sun of righteousness. As the sun rises in the east and drives away darkness by its illumination and cold by heating up the air, so also when Jesus Christ came into this world, the terrible darkness which was reigning in the world had to flee. It was Christ that illuminated Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego not to

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“Sun of righteousness”

flinch from Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace and was present Himself in the fire with them. Spiritual illumination, in whatever degree it reaches man, comes from the eternal Christ.

The impact of Christ’s teaching was felt all over the world. The officers of Jesus’ day, who were sent to arrest Jesus and bring Him, went back without Him, saying, “Never man spoke like this man” (John 7:46). In India, Hinduism began to reform itself. Those movements were called Arya Sabha and Brahma Samaj. The Greeks were idol worshippers. But within 200 years after the advent of Christ, the whole framework of their religion began to crumble. They reformed and reformed this tottering structure to make it co-exist with Christianity till ultimately it collapsed totally and was no more. The light of Christ is still penetrating Indian religions. “The Sun of righteousness shall arise.” How truly this prophecy was fulfilled!

The long-expected Messiah, who had already sent His rays in advance through His prophets, did come. When Christ came, He brought the pure light of God. The red glow in the sky before the sun appears is not the pure light. The sun itself appears red at the horizon because its light shines through the dust particles in the atmosphere touching the earth’s surface. When the prophets of the Old Testament spoke, people received a part of that light. We see the pure light when the sun rises higher. When the sun reaches its zenith, we cannot look at it. It is so bright!

The corrupt priesthood of that day could not stand that light and had to hide its face. It could not bear His words or His works. They wanted to finish with Him by killing Him. Those who received His rays of light retained them. The Words of Jesus stored in the Bible energize people even today. These words never lose their power. If we meditate on them, the Sun of righteousness rises in our hearts. The more you study the Bible, the more you feel the warmth of this Sun. You find healing there.

When a man has the true righteousness of God, he ultimately treads down the enemies of this righteousness. Jesus was

crucified by the enemies of this light. But today who stands condemned for that gruesome deed? Those enemies of righteousness, who condemned Jesus to the cross, stand condemned forever by all generations. Healing freely flows into all those who walk close to this Sun of righteousness.

“Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5). John the Baptist was that Elijah. He came before Jesus, heralding His coming. He came with the Spirit of Elijah. When he preached, people trembled. He lived a very simple life, wearing rough clothes, and eating very simple food available in the wilderness. He lived by river Jordan. The Jordan flows 600 feet below sea level, and where it flows into the Dead Sea, it is 1300 feet below sea level. In the Jordan valley there are caves where many such Jewish devotees lived. But only John the Baptist had the vision of Christ and began to preach repentance for sin and the coming of the promised Messiah. He preached repentance for the remission of sins. People flocked to hear him. He preached and baptized and admitted clearly that he was not the Christ. He was only a voice in the wilderness preparing the way for the Messiah. He was nothing in comparison to Him. When he saw Jesus, he recognized Him as the “Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world”. Jesus came when the nation was astir by the preaching of John the Baptist.

When religion goes down, it is the family that is hit. The unifying love and discipline in the family fail, and children rise up against parents. Families are ruined. During the 400 years between the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Jewish religion suffered many setbacks.

The greatest hindrance to the preaching of John the Baptist was the profligate life of Herod the Roman Tetrarch of Galilee. He pretended to promote the Jewish religion by building them synagogues while living in open sin. John had to go boldly and rebuke this big man. It meant imprisonment and death to him. But the whole country felt the impact of this rebuke.

On this scene, at this time, came Jesus, who brought them the perfect Truth. The world never heard such words or saw such a consistent life. The people thronged to hear Him and be healed of their plagues and delivered from tormenting evil spirit[s]. Have you found the key to this powerful Life?

May Jesus put the principle of the New Life and the power of the resurrection into us!

—N. Daniel

“Coming to Christ to see Him”

When I was preaching in Baltimore in 1879, an infidel reporter, who believed I was a humbug, came to the meetings with the express purpose of catching me in my remarks. He believed that my stories and anecdotes were all made up, and he intended to expose me in his paper.

One of the anecdotes I told was as follows:—

“A gentleman was walking down the streets of a city some time before. It was near Christmas-time, and many of the shop windows were filled with Christmas presents and toys. As this gentleman passed along, he saw three little girls standing before a shop window. Two of them were trying to describe to the third the things that were in the window. It aroused his attention, and he wondered what it could mean. He went back, and found that the middle one was blind—she had never been able to see—and her two sisters were endeavouring to tell her how the things looked. The gentleman stood beside them for some time and listened; he said it was most interesting to hear them trying to describe the different articles to the blind child—they found it a difficult task.”

“That is just my position in trying to tell other men about Christ,” I said. “I may talk about Him; and yet they see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. But if they will only come to Him, He will open their eyes and reveal Himself to them in all His loveliness and grace.”

After the meeting this reporter came to me and asked where I got that story. I said I had read it in a Boston paper. He told me that it happened right there in the streets of Baltimore, and that he was the gentleman referred to! It made such an impression on him, that he accepted Christ, and became one of the first converts in that city.

—D. L. Moody

REALITY CHECK!

**“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift”
(2 Corinthians 9:15).**

**Jesus Christ is “Emmanuel ... God with us”
(Matthew 1:23).**

“Sankey’s Song on Christmas Eve”

The stocky, mustachioed man nervously paced the deck of a Delaware River steamer, unbuttoning his frock coat, and regularly removing his derby to wipe his brow. ...

It was unreasonably warm for a Christmas Eve.

The man stared at the passing Pennsylvania shoreline, thinking of his family in Newcastle, some three hundred miles to the west, whom he might not see this Christmas, unless he made his train connection in Philadelphia. Christmas 1875.

“Pardon me, sir.”

“Aren’t you Ira Sankey, the gospel singer?”

He smiled at the lady and her husband. ... He thought he was gracious to acknowledge that he was, indeed, Ira D. Sankey.

“We’ve seen your pictures in the newspapers.”

He had not wanted to be recognized: not today, not tonight. He was tired, fretful, and warm. Fact of the matter was, he was angry and provoked with Mr. Moody.

“We thought you were still in England!” said the lady.

“We returned last week, Madam,” Mr. Sankey replied in resonant baritone voice. And if Mr. Moody hadn’t insisted on more conferences and meetings, he thought, he would have been home by now for Christmas with his family. Instead he was a prisoner on a river steamer.

“Mr. Sankey, would you sing for us? It is Christmas Eve, and we’d love to hear you.”

Mr. Sankey said he would sing, and his presence was announced loudly across the deck. As the people gathered, he pondered

what he might sing. ... He would sing a Christmas carol or two, unaccompanied. Perhaps he would get the passengers to sing along with him.

He tried to shed his melancholy. He was a famous person, whether he liked it or not, and he was not normally shy about his gifts. He was known on two continents as the gospel singer, the song leader and soloist working with Dwight L. Moody, who was surely the greatest evangelist of the day.

Perhaps God had intended it his way—for him to be in this place, on this boat, at this particular time.

“I thought I would sing a carol or two.” He then added, “But somehow I feel I should sing another song.”

“Sing one of your own songs!” shouted someone unseen. “Sing The Ninety-And-Nine!” commanded another.

“No, thank you very much, but I know what I must sing.” He was smiling broadly now, feeling much better about himself and the situation, enjoying his congregation. “I shall sing a song by William Bradbury. And if you know it, as I’m sure many of you do, hum along with me.”

Sankey began to sing.

“Savior, like a shepherd lead us, Much we need Thy tender care; In Thy pleasant pastures feed us, For our use Thy folds prepare; Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus! Thou has bought us. Thine we are.”

He sang all three verses. There was uncommon silence, and Ira Sankey felt it would be inappropriate to sing anything else. So he simply wished everyone a Merry Christmas, and the people murmured a greeting in return.

The silence returned, and he was alone

again.

“Your name is Ira Sankey?”

“Yes.” He recognized neither the voice nor the man.

The man came out of the shadows. He was about his own age, with a beard beginning to turn gray. ...

“Were you ever in the Army, Mr. Sankey?”

“Yes, I was. I joined up in 1860.”

“I wonder if you can remember back to 1862. Did you ever do guard duty, at night, in Maryland?”

“Yes, I did!” Sankey felt a stab of memory and excitement. “It might have been at Sharpsburg.”

“I was in the Army, too. The Confederate Army. And I saw you that night.”

Sankey looked at him warily.

“You were parading around in your blue uniform. Had you in my sights, you standing there in the light of the full moon, which was right foolish of you, you know.” The man paused. “Then you began to sing.”

Amazingly, Sankey remembered.

“You sang the same song you sang tonight, ‘Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us.’”

“I remember.”

My mother sang that song a lot, but I never expected no soldier to be singing it at midnight on guard duty. Especially a Union soldier.” The man sighed. “Obviously I didn’t shoot you.”

“And obviously I am grateful.” Sankey smiled.

“I always wondered who you were. Who it was I didn’t kill that night, on account of his singing an old Sunday School song.”

Sankey shook his head.

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CHRIST IS VICTOR

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“His first Christmas in Heaven”

Christmas is the season when the birth of Jesus Christ is remembered, although it has become more associated with sending friendly greetings and presents or with happy reunions. People often look forward to it with joy; to some, however, an empty seat at the family table is a source of sorrow.

One summer, a Christian family went to a coastal town on holiday. While there, one of the boys, little Willie, fell ill and died; the father's heart seemed to have almost received an incurable wound.

The months from July to December sped by, but the parental heart became increasingly bowed down under the load of sorrow. The climax seemed to be reached on Christmas morning when the family were seated at the table for breakfast—but one vacant chair told of a

break in the family circle, a little grave, and a heavy heart at the head of the table.

Looking across the table, one of the boys said: “Father, this will be Willie's first Christmas in Heaven.” “Ah!” said the father, “I could have blessed that boy for reminding me that if Willie was absent from his earthly father's board he was ‘far better’ at his Heavenly Father's table.”

Another little fellow then exclaimed, “But, father, isn't it always Christmas in heaven?” “Ah!” said the father, “I could have doubly blessed that second boy for reminding me that, through Jesus' precious Blood, Willie had donned the white robe, never to have it spotted; had received the crown, never to lay it aside; had been welcomed into that Land where ‘the Lamb is all the glory’.”

“A Child's Prayer Answered”

I remember a child that lived with her parents in a small village. One day the news came that her father had joined the army (at the beginning of [the American Civil] War), and a few days after the landlord came to demand the rent. The mother told him she hadn't got it, and that her husband had gone into the army. He was a hard hearted wretch, and he stormed and said that they must leave the home. ... After he was gone, the mother threw herself into the arm-chair, and began to weep bitterly. Her little girl whom she had taught to pray in faith ... came up to her, and said, “What makes you cry, mamma? I will pray to God to give us a little house, and won't He?” ... So the little child went into the next room and began to pray. ... “O God, you have come and taken away father,

and mamma has got no money, and the landlord will turn us out because we can't pay, and we will have to sit on the doorstep, and mamma will catch cold. Give us a little home.” Then she waited, as if for an answer, and then added, “Won't you, please, God?” She came out of that room quite happy, expecting a house to be given them. The mother felt reproved. ... However, she has never paid any rent since, for God heard the prayer of that little one, and touched the heart of the cruel landlord. God give us the faith of that little child, that we may likewise expect an answer, “nothing wavering.”

—Moody's Anecdotes And Illustrations Related in his Revival Work by the Great Evangelist Dwight L. Moody

“Sankey's Song on Christmas Eve”

“Frankly, up until tonight, the name of Ira Sankey wouldn't have meant much to me. Guess I don't read the papers like I should. I didn't know you'd turn out to be so famous!” The man smiled for the first time. “But I reckon I would have recognized the voice and the song anyplace.”

Sankey reflected on what might have been.

“Do you think we might talk a mite?” asked the man. “I think you owe it to me. Very little has gone right for me. Not before the war. Not during it. And not since.”

Ira Sankey put an arm around his former enemy. They found a place in a quiet corner of the deck to sit and chat. Sankey's impatience and anger had passed. He no longer fretted that he might be delayed in seeing his family.

Christmas would soon be here. It always came but sometimes in the strangest ways.

The night was still warm but it seemed filled with brighter stars. Sankey even thought he heard the sound of angels' voices—singing, of course, and singing the Good News.

Even if Christmas is never mentioned in Heaven, Christ shall always be there; once crowned with thorns, He is crowned with glory and honour and in the midst of the throne in Heaven (Revelation 22:3).

Yet except you are spiritually born again, you will never be in Heaven (John 3:3, 7). Therefore be really serious as time so quickly runs its course. If called away from earth, would you like Willie be a saved sinner washed “in the Blood of the Lamb [Jesus Christ]” (Revelation 7:14) to be with Him in glory for all eternity? Or would it be as an unsaved sinner with God's wrath abiding on you (John 3:36), to be with the Devil and his angels forevermore? (Matthew 25:41).

—Hy. Pickering, 100 Thrilling Tales

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