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"CHRIST'S BIRTHDAY"

By the late C. D. Cole



"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Hebrews 1:5,6). "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Psalms 2:7). "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up" (Isa. 50:5-9). "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts 13:33). "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (Rom. 6:9,10). "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the

dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

My theme is the birthday of Christ, but my texts are not the ones you would expect to be chosen for such a theme. This is the day which is well nigh universally regarded as the birthday of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Comparatively few will entertain any other thought than that Christ was born on the 25th day of December. The facts are that the day of Christ's physical entrance into this world is not known. But, be that as it may, the day will be widely and variously observed as His birthday. Some will take it as a day for letting loose the reins of lust and passion. More whiskey will be consumed, and more sin generally, will be committed during this season than at any other time of the year. Many will lift the ban against intemperance in eating, and gorged stomachs will be followed by pains of indigestion. Many churches will be putting on programs for the entertainment of the sensual nature. Cantatas and pageants will supplant the preaching of the gospel. It is a season of fun and frolic, of cheer and goodwill. Mixed with this is a work of benevolence participated in by both the world and the church. Many baskets of food will go to the hungry and unfortunate. All in all, the day cannot be said to be characterized by real love to Christ whose birth is being celebrated. When the real motives are considered, the day is not observed in honour of Christ, but for

fleshly gratification. A visitor from another world who did not know human nature, might suppose that Christ was greatly beloved by this world. But to Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, piercing the masks of human hypocrisy, the whole affair is a huge drama of deceit and hypocrisy. I shall not use my texts until at the end of my message. We shall visit the picture gallery of the Scriptures and look at the Man, Christ Jesus. We shall first look at Him through human eyes, and then through Divine eyes.

I. By looking at Christ through human eyes, I mean that we shall see what men thought of Him; we shall look at His record according to human judgment.

1. He was not very popular. It is true that He experienced spurts of popularity when He was feeding the hungry and healing the diseased. But even then He knew that men were not sincere, and could not be trusted. "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:23-25). "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6:26).

2. He was not very successful as the world counts success. He accumulated no wealth; He contributed nothing to the world's commerce; He added nothing to scientific discoveries; He made no contribution to art and architecture; He founded no benevolent institutions. As the world counts success there was never a greater failure than the life of our Lord.

3. He was not great socially. He was handicapped in His birth—He was simply known as the son of poor parents, who lived in the despised village of Nazareth. He was a root out of dry ground, with no form nor comeliness that caused men to admire Him. His social standing was also hurt by His eating with publicans and sinners. He made no effort to break into society. He had not come to win social fame, but to save sinners. Think of Jesus, who is our example as well as Saviour, seeking an invitation to a card party or hoping to see His name in the social column of the Jerusalem Times.

4. He was not great politically. He disdained politics. He aspired to no political office. To the man who asked him to settle the dispute over an estate, He said, "Who made me a judge or divider over you?" (Luke 12:14). He refused to be either allied with or to oppose the rulers of this world. He refused to be drafted by His fickle admirers, and ran away when they sought to make Him king. His position was summed up when He said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

5. He was not great religiously. He was condemned to death by the Jews on a religious charge. He was called a glutton and a wine-bibber (Matt. 11:19). His counsel was not sought by the religious leaders. It is true one of them, Nicodemus, came to Him under cover of darkness to talk about religious matters, but Christ met him with the curt statement that he needed to be born again. Religious headquarters were at Jerusalem, but He failed to cooperate. He addressed religionists as a generation of vipers. Others were told that their father was the devil.

6. He was not great as a preacher. His first recorded sermon was at Nazareth, his home town, and the people who heard it were so enraged that they tried to kill Him. Luke 4:16-29. When He preached upon the bread of life, many of His disciples said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" When He preached upon total depravity, in which He said, "No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him," many went back and walked no more with Him. His ministry was cut short by a shameful death. The world could not tolerate the Son of God for very long. He was despised and rejected of men. Hypocrites were uneasy in His presence, and they sought relief by killing Him.

Such was the record of Christ in the eyes of men. The antichrist will be great before men.

II. Let us now look at the record He made in the sight of God. Here the story is altogether different. We will consider Him,

1. In His personal character. He was very popular with God. He was daily God's delight, and with Him God was always well-pleased. In every point where man failed, Christ was a success.

(1) He had no self-will. He lived in the channel of God's will. He could say in all sincerity, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

(2) He obeyed perfectly. He obeyed unto death even the death of the cross.

(3) He lived a life of perfect faith. He is the great example of faith.

2. In His mediatorial character, He was both condemned and justified. As a mediator He came to effect reconciliation between God and men. To do this, He who was already God, assumed human nature and, thus, became the God-man. In this way He could touch both God and men, which is essential to the success of a mediator. In the salvation of men God's law must be upheld. The only way to uphold it is for satisfaction to be rendered to it. Christ came to render that satisfaction in the place of those who could not render it.

(1) Christ was condemned and put to death as the sinner's substitute. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:

for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). He who was personally sinless was officially and representatively guilty. That explains His awful punishment by God, which caused Him to cry, "My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?"

(2) Christ was justified and raised from the dead. Christ was charged with our sins and in His death, payment was made. God raised Him from the dead as an acknowledgment that satisfaction had been rendered to His law. Now when satisfaction is rendered to justice there can be no longer any condemnation. We have now reached our texts: Isa. 50:6-8; Heb. 1:5,6; Rev. 1:5; Acts 13:33.

The resurrection of Christ is called His birthday. On this day He began to live unto God; death hath no more dominion over Him. Our Lord has had two birthdays. In His first birth, He was born in order to die; in His second birth, He was born to live forever.

His people are related to Him not in the first birth, but in the second. Rom. 7:4. The Christ who was born under law has died; the Christ who satisfied law is alive. This is the Christ to whom we are married.

"Just As I Am"

More than a century ago, in the year 1836, a young girl, Miss Charlotte Elliott, was preparing for a grand ball, to be given in her native town. Full of gay anticipation she started out one day to her dressmaker to have a fine dress made for the occasion. On her way she met her pastor, an earnest and faithful man, and in the greetings which passed between them he learned her errand. He reasoned and expostulated, and finally pleaded with her to stay away from the ball. Greatly vexed, she answered, "I wish you would mind your own business!" and went her way.

In due time the ball came off; and this young girl was the gayest of the gay. She was flattered and caressed; but after dancing all night, laying her weary head on her pillow only with returning light, she was far from happy. In all the pleasure there had been a thorn, and now conscience made her wretched. Her pastor had always been a loving, cherished friend, and her rudeness to him rankled in her breast. More than all, the truth of his words came to her heart and would give her no rest. After three days of misery, during which life became almost insupportable, she went to the minister with her trouble, saying: "For three days I have been the most wretched girl in the world, and now, oh, that I were a Christian! I want to be a Christian! What must I do?"

We need not be told that the pastor freely for-

gave her for her rudeness to himself, nor that he joyfully directed her to the true Source of peace. "Just give yourself, my child, to the Lamb of God just as you are." This was a new Gospel to her; she had never comprehended it before.

"What! Just as I am?" she asked. "Do you know that I am one of the worst sinners in the world? How can God accept me just as I am?"

"That is exactly what you must believe," was the answer. "You must come to Him just as you are." (Repentant, with no righteousness but His to plead.) The young girl felt overwhelmed as the simple truth took possession of her mind. She went to her room, knelt down, and offered God her heart, guilty and vile as it was, to be cleansed and made fit for his indwelling. As she knelt, peace-full, overflowing-filled her soul. Inspired by the new and rapturous experience, she then and there wrote the hymn beginning:

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst't me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Little did Charlotte Elliott think of the fame or of the immortality of the words she had written. It was simply putting her heart on paper; and therefore the hymn, born of her experience, appeals to other hearts needing the cleansing power of the blood of the Lamb.

This hymn has given consolation to millions of anxious people. Like the author, many think they are too vile to come to God, but must wait until they have become better. In the hymn Miss Elliott expresses the true way of coming "Just as I am."

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt;
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, poor wretched, blind,
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am; Thy love unknown
Hath broken ev'ry barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

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