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CHRIST AND THE BIBLE

By J. B. Chapman

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INTRODUCTION

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The opening day of the Tenth General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene, June 16, 1940, was a memorable one in the annals of the church. The blessing of God was unmistakably present from the opening song until the closing benediction. The morning communion service with Doctor Goodwin's message lifted us to heights of spiritual fellowship with God and with one another. Doctor Williams' characteristically stirring message in the afternoon was a challenge to better things for the days to come. The evening sermon was delivered by Dr. J. B. Chapman. His subject was "Christ and the Bible." It was an eloquent, scholarly and inspiring message that seemed to electrify the congregation of almost 6,000 listeners that crowded the great auditorium. Requests and pleas for the publication of the sermon were made both to the speaker and to the Publishing House executives. Therefore the message is now available, for the benefit of many who heard it and wish to read it as well as hear it, also for the many thousands who were not privileged to attend the service but who through reading this address will be led to a deeper love for the Bible and the Christ of the Bible.

P. H. LUNN

CHRIST AND THE BIBLE

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me (John 5: 39).

The people who gathered about Jesus understood Him to claim that He was the Son of God in such a sense as others are not sons of God. They understood His claim to be the highest possible claim, that of full and proper deity. Such an unusual claim could not be accepted without unusual evidence, and Jesus offered them this unusual evidence.

First, He offered them the testimony of John the Baptist. There were doubtless those standing by who had heard John preach and knew the grip of the words of that mighty prophet by personal experience. Those who had not heard John personally knew many who had heard him, and there was a universal conviction that John was a prophet sent from God. But the climax of John's ministry was not in his call to repentance. Nor yet in his demand that men should be baptized with water as evidence of their radical and permanent change of thought and conduct. Rather, the climax came that day when he pointed out Jesus to His disciples and cried, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" John was greater than all the prophets in that he prophesied the coming of Christ and then lived to see his prophecies fulfilled, and to himself initiate the Messiah into His office, and to furnish to Him his first disciples. So Jesus turned to John, and said to the people, "Ye believe John . . . but John spoke of me." John's testimony was so clear and unequivocal that one could not hold to John and not also hold to Christ, and Jesus pointed out this fact to those who gathered about Him.

In the second place, Jesus offered the testimony of His own miraculous works. Satan and wicked men can work "lying wonders," but true miracles must always be such works as none but God can do, and they must be done for the purpose of proving some messenger as divinely sent or some message as divinely given. Others have done miracles in another's name. But Jesus did His miracles to prove His claim that He was the Son of God, and His works testified truly that it was so. It was not necessary that He should point out one work or enumerate many. Those who gathered about knew too well of the nature of the works which He performed to need further evidence on this point. The blind had been made to see. The deaf had been made to hear. Lepers had been cleansed, and even the dead had been raised to life again. And all the time He was doing these mighty works He was telling the people He was the Son of God, and they must either deny His works or acknowledge His claims.

In the third place, He offered them the Father's own testimony. In the presence of the multitude that day when He was baptized of John the Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon Him, and the Father's voice from heaven announced, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." These occurrences were so recent that they had not yet been disputed. But Jesus claimed this testimony to His deity and drove home to the hearts of His hearers the fact that His high claims were substantiated by the highest authority.

In the fourth place, Jesus offered the testimony of the Holy Scriptures in support of His high claims. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." The people who listened to Him that day had access to the Old Testament Scriptures and upon the truths found therein they based their faith for acceptance with God, and their hope for eternal life. But Jesus is so identified with the Scriptures that one must accept Him if he accepts the Scriptures, and he must reject the Scriptures if he rejects Christ. The two are inseparable. Christ is the living Word, the Bible is the written Word. They complement one another as modes of

revealing God to men, and they are always in perfect agreement. In the first chapter of John, speaking of the Word which was with God and which was God, the reference is to Christ the living Word, and not to the Bible. But of the Bible Jesus said, "The scriptures cannot be broken." And, so, our theme is Christ and the Bible.

We have in the Bible the most remarkable book in the world. It is so outstanding, in fact, that it is very properly called "The Book." And although as in the days of Solomon, "Of the making of books there is no end," yet the Bible is in a class altogether by itself, and men know what book we mean when we speak of "The Book," just as they know what sun is intended when we mention "the sun," even though there are millions of suns in the universe. In fact the Bible has been likened to the sun. An untutored woman sat reading her Bible when a learned skeptic came along and inquired, "What is that you are reading?" The woman answered, "It is the Word of God." "Who told you it is the Word of God?" "God told me." "And how did God tell you that?" The woman was quiet for a moment and then looking up toward the brilliant sun, she inquired, "What is that?" "It is the sun," the skeptic replied. "Who told you it is the sun?" "No one need tell me that. It tells me itself. I know it is the sun for it gives me life and light and heat and happiness." "And that is how God told me this is His Word. It also gives me life and light and heat and happiness. It is its own witness."

Our Bible is very divine, and yet very human. It reveals the thoughts of God in the language of men. Its truths are the most sublime, but its language is the simplest and fullest. It has to possess these two qualities to be of use to us. If its language were the language of angels, we could not know its meaning, and if its truths were only such as relate to things material and transient we would not be benefited, even if we did understand. So like our Lord, this Book combines the human and the divine in proper proportions to serve the purpose for which it was given.

This Bible is remarkable for both its variety and its unity. As we have it here, there are two general divisions, the Old Testament and the New Testament. But these two are one. The New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament, and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. The Old Testament is like the swelling bud: the New Testament is like the full blown flower. Those who try to read the Old Testament without the New Testament read with a veil upon their eyes and hearts. Those who read the New Testament without reading the Old Testament are like those who try to build a house without giving attention to the foundation. And the Bible is its own best commentary. To know all the Bible says on a subject is to know what it teaches concerning that subject. And there is much in the idea of the old Scotch woman who said of the difficult and learned commentary which her pastor gave her: "It is a difficult book for one so ignorant as I. But the blessed Book throws a great deal of light upon its meaning."

Inside the two Testaments are sixty-six divisions which we call books. There are thirty-nine such divisions in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament. But it is no accident that these sixty-six books are bound under one cover, for they are, after all, just one book. They are one in that they are all given by inspiration of God. One in that they have reference to the same end -- the salvation of men. They all teach a common morality, a single way of salvation, and warn men of their responsibility to Almighty God both now and at the future judgment. There are of necessity difficulties in the Bible, but there are no contradictions. The

nature of the subject matter makes mystery inescapable, but the content is dependable, and whoever will can find herein the road he should take.

Within the scope of this wonderful Book is practically every form of literature known to man. There is the historical, like the Book of Genesis; legislative, like the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount; biographical, like the four Gospels; poetic, like the Psalms; Wisdom Literature, like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; drama, like Job; epistolary, like the writings of Paul; and apocalyptic literature like Daniel and Revelation. Within these books are parables, fables, metaphors, dreams, allegories, and every other form which words and sentences take to make clear the thought and feelings from which they spring. It may be that Some portions will not appeal to you, but be sure they will appeal to someone, and you will find something that suits your temper and caliber.

All the Bible is inspired. We do not say the Bible contains the Word of God. We say it is the Word of God. All the Bible is important. We do not say it is all of equal importance. It were folly to say that those chapters in First Chronicles which are filled with hard names are of equal value with John three, sixteen, which Martin Luther called, "The Little Bible," and which he said would yet contain the message of salvation, if all the rest of the Bible were destroyed. But while all parts are not of equal importance, all are important in the interest of a complete revelation. It is like the human body. No one would claim that his little finger is just as important as his lungs, yet the little finger is necessary if one is to have a complete body without mutilation.

The Bible came to us through forty or fifty different human authors who lived during a period of fourteen or fifteen hundred years. These men were from various walks of life and possessed a variety of capacities, and held a wide scope of positions. There were humble men like Amos, the gatherer of sycamore fruit, and kingly men like David and Solomon. There were priests like Ezekiel, and men of affairs like Nehemiah. There were untutored fishermen like Peter, and logicians and scholars like Paul. The centuries covered saw many changes in the standards of life and customs of men, but when the products of so many minds and of so many centuries are brought together they constitute one consistent whole. All these things testify to the divine origin of this blessed Book. I think it was Hadley who suggested that if forty-eight men should meet at a given place, each man coming from a different state, each man unaware that the others were coming, and each bringing with him a piece of marble, each piece of different size and shape from any of the others: then, if all these pieces of marble placed in a heap resulted in a beautiful and symmetrical pyramid, an intelligent observer would say, "You cannot fool me. There were many hands engaged in this work, but one mind planned it. Otherwise there would not come out this irrefutable evidence of design." But our Bible is even more remarkable than the illustration suggests, for its authors were men of differing ages and even of different nationalities, and yet they all made their contribution and the result was one Book. And surely every intelligent man will say, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. In the course of time these languages ceased to be spoken by the people of the living nations, so it has been necessary to translate the Bible into the languages the people can understand. Either this had to be done or else men had to be taught the Hebrew and the Greek, no matter what their mother tongue. And so the Bible in whole or in part has been translated into more than a thousand

languages and dialects. No other book has approached such a record. But the remarkable thing is that the essential message is maintained in all the forms in which the Bible has yet appeared.

During the last four hundred years many translations and various versions have appeared in our English language. There are minor differences among them, but not a single fundamental doctrine or essential practice is affected. So that the person who wants to find the way to God and heaven need not trouble himself much about versions. Let him read it in any version: the Authorized, the English Revised, the American Revised, the Douay or Catholic, the New Testament in Modern Speech, Moffatt's translation -- any of them, they are all good, and they all tell you all you need to know to find the way to God and heaven. Read the Bible as literature, Study it as a textbook, give attention to it for devotional purposes -- any way you take it, it is good.

Then there is the question of understanding the Bible. There are difficult and obscure passages, of course, but all that is essential to salvation and life is clear and plain and definite. The scholars can help us with the hard places, but the best qualification for understanding the Bible is a willingness to obey it. And I think the majority of us are like Mark Twain when he said, "The parts of the Bible which I cannot understand do not trouble me much. I am troubled more by the parts I can understand." It does not matter whether you or I ever reach the place where we can explain the pedigree of Melchisedec, the important thing is that we shall repent of sin and be born again and walk in the light as God gives us to know what is right, and we do not have to be scholars to do these things.

Thank God for this wonderful Book! Let us join in with that great company of men who have found here a gold mine inexhaustible, and have, like John Wesley, delighted to call themselves, "Men of one Book," meaning that the Bible is an authoritative and dependable guide which requires neither revision nor supplement.

The saintly Whitehead once wrote, "The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its decisions are immutable. Read it to believe, believe it to be safe, practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's guide, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword and the Christian's charter. Here paradise is restored, heaven opened and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, daily, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor and condemn all who trifle with its contents."

But the chief unity of the Bible grows out of the fact that it has but one hero -- the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible mentions many men. But the men of the Bible are important only in their relationship to Jesus. A long roster of names makes interesting reading because all the men in that list were progenitors of Jesus on the human side. Good men, great men, and wise men all become types of Jesus and hence occupy a relative importance. Even bad men are known because they contrast with the One who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. And if you find a good

man in the Bible and cannot make out just why his story is told, you will usually find the key by bringing the story to bear upon the Ideal Man who is the hero of the whole Book.

The Bible contains many descriptions of places and things. But places and things are important only as they touch the life of Jesus. Bethlehem is the best known city in the world, because Jesus was born there. Jerusalem can never be forgotten, because Jesus died there. The tabernacle and the temple are interesting to the minutest detail, because they speak of Jesus and His work for the salvation of men. The Bible is simply a book about Jesus. Jesus is the subject of its history and its prophecy. He is the antitype of its types. If you find something in the Bible that seems to be a very good thing and you do not know what it means, just guess that it in some way represents Christ and you will not miss it one time in a hundred.

And what is said of the Bible in general can be said of every book in the Bible in particular. In Genesis Jesus is the "seed of the woman" that bruises the serpent's head. In Exodus He is the Paschal Lamb whose blood upon the lintels and the doorposts caused the destroying angel to "Passover." In Leviticus He is the great High Priest whose intercessions are accepted for all who believe. In Numbers He is the guiding pillar of cloud and fire on the way to our promised land. In Deuteronomy He is the "prophet like unto Moses" who shall teach His people and guide them unerringly. In Joshua He is "the man with the drawn sword" come to command the hosts of the Lord and to lead them on to victory. He is the Judge just and supreme in the Book of Judges. He is the model husband (the Ishi of the Church) in the Book of Ruth. He is the unerring Seer in the Books of Samuel, the faultless King in the Books of Kings, the unfailing Sovereign in the Books of Chronicles, the pattern preacher in Ezra, the Restorer of the waste places in Nehemiah, and the Deliverer of the nation in the Book of Esther. In Job He is the Lord of the Resurrection and the Daysman or Umpire who will give us consideration in the game of life. In the Psalms He is the Good Shepherd, the Shield and Buckler, the fortress and Strong Tower. He is the personification of wisdom in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and the Ideal Lover in the Song of Solomon. In Isaiah He is the child born, the Son given, the prince of peace, the wonderful Counselor, and the Suffering Savior. He is the Balm of Gilead and the Great Physician of Jeremiah, the Only Hope of Lamentations, the Reviver of the dry bones in the valley in Ezekiel, and the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands which shall destroy all kingdoms of the earth and itself fill all the earth in the Book of Daniel.

Then we come to the Minor Prophets where we find that Jesus is the Redeemer of the unworthy in Hosea, the Outpurer of the full measure of the Spirit in Joel, and the Giver of abundant harvests in Amos. In Obadiah He is the Enlarger of Israel's inheritance. In Jonah He is the Merciful Ruler. In Micah He is the Gatherer of the nations to Zion. In Nahum He is the Healer of Bruises. In Habakkuk He is the inheritance that remains when the fig tree fails to blossom, neither is there fruit in the vines; when the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stall. He is the Author of Israel's song in Zephaniah, the Beautifier of the New Temple in Haggai, the Opener of the cleansing fountain in Zechariah, and the Purifier of the sons of Levi in Malachi.

In the New Testament Jesus breaks forth as the Messiah of the Jews in Matthew, the peerless World Worker in Mark, the Son of Man in Luke, and the Son of God in John. He is the Outpurer of the Holy Ghost in the Acts, the Author of the Law of Life in Romans, the Head of the

Church in Corinthians, the Giver of free salvation in Galatians, the Eternal Author of Holiness in Ephesians, and the highest goal of life and eternity in Philippians. He is the Indwelling Christ in Colossians, the Lord of the Second Advent in First and Second Thessalonians, the Ideal Pastor in Timothy and Titus, and the Friend of the Friendless in Philemon. In Hebrews Jesus is the antitype of all types; the head of all creation, higher than angels, and yet lower than angels in that He tasted death for every man. His blood takes the place of all the blood of beasts and birds that ever died on Jewish altars, and through the rent veil of His smitten body He makes a way for us to enter into the inner sanctum sanctorum where God himself sits upon the throne of His glory. In James Jesus is the pattern for practical living. In Peter Christ's is the voice of thunder. In John Jesus is the personification of love. In Jude He is the God of lightning. In Revelation Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega.

Christ is the Second Adam as the head of the new creation. He is a Prophet whose words never fail. He is a Priest after the order of Melchisedec whose everlasting priesthood enables Him to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him. He is a King who shall sit upon the throne of His father David and rule from the rivers unto the ends of the earth. He is the Companion of the Everlasting Father and the ever blessed Spirit, and is Himself the Second Person in the adorable Trinity.

In the imagery of this blessed Bible Jesus Christ is the answer to every need. To the hungry He is bread. To the thirsty He is water. To the sick He is physician and healing balm. To the accused He is Advocate at court. To the condemned He brings pardon. He opens the prison to those already incarcerated. To those whose lives are wasted He gives beauty for ashes. He is the Rose of Sharon for beauty, the Lily of the Valley for purity, the Morning Star for Hope, the Lamb of God for atonement, and a Great Rock in a weary land and "a shelter in the time of storm." He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah for power, and in this function He breaks every chain and gives us the victory again and again. He is money to the poor, wisdom to the ignorant, and holiness to the defiled. And if there be a prayer for which no fitting word can be found, then he is the answer to that too, for He is "the desire of all nations."

When Jesus was here in the flesh He never met His match, although He was challenged at every step. Denied a place in the palace, He was born a King in a stable. Refused the adoration of sages, He was worshipped by shepherds. Since no Levites came to chant, angels sang His Christmas carol. The great did not apply for tuition in His school, so He chose humble fishermen and despised tax-gatherers to be His disciples.

Being Himself a miracle, the normal atmosphere of His life was friendly to miracles. People regularly came to ask Him to do the impossible. And after admitting it to be impossible they went right along and asked Him to do it.

When taxes came due and the purse was empty, the first fish taken at the Master's command furnished money for double taxes. When ten thousand people came to Him in the desert He fed them all without opening a fish market or founding a bakery. Ten lepers were healed by the Word of His power all in a group. Maimed, halt, blind, leprous, palsied -- all were alike to Him. He healed them all. When the boat went away and left Him, He made a pavement of the sea, and reached His destination on time. When the restless waves would flood the ship on which He rode,

He calmed them as a mother would put her feverish child to sleep. He broke up the only funeral He ever attended by restoring the dead youth alive to his mother. "It is fortunate," says D. L. Moody, "that He called the name of Lazarus that day when He said, 'Come forth.' For otherwise all the dead would have come at His invitation, as they will yet do some time."

His whole life was vicarious and substitutionary. He came down to our world that we might go up to His world. He was born in a stable and cradled in a manger that He might get down beneath us all and lift us up to God. He was despised and rejected of men that we might be accepted of God and admired by angels forevermore. He walked the dirt roads of our world that we might walk the golden streets of heaven. He bore a cross that we might wear a crown. He drank vinegar mingled with gall that we might drink the water of life. He wore a crown of thorns that we might wear a crown of life. He was with the wicked in His death that we might be with the righteous in everlasting life. He was lifted up upon a cross that we might be lifted up upon a throne. He went down into the grave that we might come up out of the grave in the glory of His resurrection. He took our place on earth that we might share His place in heaven forever.

Oh, blessed Christ, Thou hast won my heart. I fall at Thy feet in adoration. I worship Thee. I praise and glorify Thee. I ask no portion except the privilege of sitting at Thy feet. In Thy presence there is fulness of joy and at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.

I cannot understand all the ways of God with me. But I know He has my good at heart, and I will trust Him forevermore. A man passing along the way saw a father attempting to chastise his little son. But the son drew near, threw his arms about his father's knees and clung so close that the blows fell upon him with small effect. And that is what I am doing and plan to do. I shall cling closely to Him. Even though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. No matter what He does, I know it is done in love, and I shall not draw away.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

"My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;
"My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

I clasp this blessed Book to my heart. I accept it as my way bill to duty and to glory. I believe its promises. I rest upon its assurances. I promise to obey its precepts. It is God's Book, and by His grace, it is my Book too.

And the Christ of whom this Bible testifies, I take Him as my Savior. I receive Him into my heart. I dedicate to Him my life, my all. I praise Him that He does now receive me, and that through His blood I am pardoned and cleansed from sin. In life He is my pattern. In death He shall be my hope. In heaven I ask for nothing more than the privilege of adoring Him, blessed Lamb, forevermore. Blessed Book, glorious Christ! My soul doth magnify God my Savior. Let us pray.

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THE END