**SERIES 01 (PREACHED IN 1907) - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**04. CHRIST, GREATER THAN JACOB by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life."*

*John 4:12-14*

WE HAVE no difficulty in believing that Jesus was greater than Jacob. Jacob was subtle, unscrupulous, greedy, cowardly. Jesus was simple, scrupulous, generous, courageous. That is comparison on the lowest level. We need not stay with it for a moment. We are moreover, quite ready to grant the superiority of Jesus to Jacob if we think of the excellencies of Jacob. Jacob was a man of faith. The deepest thing in him was his confidence in God. The trouble with Jacob was not that he did not believe in God but that he had a firmly rooted conviction that it was necessary for him to help God, in order to reach his destination. When, as a man of faith, Jesus is put into comparison with Jacob, the superiority of our Lord is at once evident. There was no night of wrestling in the life of Jesus. Whole nights of prayer, yes, nights of quiet meditation and communion with His Father. Jacob had to be crippled in order to be crowned. There was no crippling in the life of Jesus. His faith was quiet and restful.

Yet all this does not bring us to the true view-point for the consideration of our subject. The comparison was one suggested not by a Jew, but by a Samaritan. The Samaritans claimed to be the pure descendants of Jacob through Joseph. Starting from the Samaritan standpoint, the emphasis of the woman's question was this, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob?" It was the national outlook which characterised her question, and it was to that Christ made His response.

We take the comparison within these limits, and there are three things that I shall attempt to say to you concerning the Superiority of Christ to Jacob. First Christ was greater than Jacob as the founder of a nation. Secondly, he was greater than Jacob in the benefit He conferred. Finally, letting the woman herself be the illustration, He was greater than Jacob in His dealing with individual souls.

He was first greater as the Founder of a nation. Just before he died Jacob foretold the future of his sons. He spoke of their faults, their excellencies, and foretold the results which would follow from what they were in themselves. Then what? Nothing! He was quite powerless. He saw what these men were, and what the issues would be, but he could not change anything that he saw. He left them to hereditary taint, to their own temperament, and to environment. In a moment we see the contrast. In the great commissions of Jesus, uttered as He was about to leave His disciples, He spoke in every case of power which was to be at their disposal, and which would transform them, and equip them for the work to which He was sending them.

The contrast is graphic. Jacob, a man of clear insight, keen, shrewd, far-seeing, looking into the faces of twelve men, his; sons, telling them what they are, and then dying, having no power to mould the coming Nation. Jesus standing in the midst of eleven men, and looking into their faces, says nothing about them individually, does not point out anything of their own fault, does not warn them in the presence of their weaknesses, does not predict that those weaknesses will develop into catastrophe; just quietly says, "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." He stands before the men who are to found His Kingdom and be the first of His nation, and from whose spiritual begetting the nation is to grow to its final glory and proportion, and speaks only of His own power. Recognising their weakness He bids them, "Tarry … until ye be clothed with power from on high." Recognizing His power, He dare take these weak, frail men, the denier, and the men who fled in the hour of crisis, and speak to them of power which is equal to making them His apostles, His pioneers, His witnesses, the men through whose instrumentality the word shall go forth which shall build His nation.

Jacob left his sons with the hereditary taint of evil to perpetuate itself in their descendants. Jesus so dealt with His apostles that the things which, left to work themselves out, would blight the nation, were mastered. Jacob had to leave his sons to outwork their temperament. Jesus took hold of these men and sanctified their temperament. Peter never ceased to be impulsive, passionate, but the impulse of Peter was directed toward the ultimate goal. John never ceased to be the dreamer of the Galilean Sea, seeing, listening, wondering, peering, but he became the interpreter of the deep things of the Christ.

Jesus at last builds the city of God and writes the names of the sons of Jacob on its pearly gates, and the names of His own disciples upon its foundation stones.

Jesus stands out as the supreme Founder of national life. One pauses when one says this because it has been so little realized, nay, shall I say rather, so little manifest. Reverting to that great word of Peter, "Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession," I would say that the Church has most signally, sorrowfully failed in realizing the third description, "a holy nation." We are still suffering throughout the whole Church of God from the intrusion within her borders of things of the material world, things that have robbed us of ability to reveal to the world the true national ideal. Approach that from another standpoint. We speak of Christian England. England is not Christian. We sometimes speak of Christian America. America is not Christian. We speak of Christian nations. There are none. There is no nation today that deserves the name. There is a sense in which it is permissible to use it when putting nations into comparison with one another. We may speak of a Christian nation to distinguish it from, say, a Mohammedan nation. There is, however, only one Christian nation. It is composed of souls who are loyal to the Kingship of Christ, who share His life and are responsible for the manifestation in the world of the breadth, beauty, and beneficence of the Kingdom of God. The nation is not seen, is not known, is not visible. Broken lights are everywhere. Communities are to be found where the ideal is realized; but the great massive ideal of the revelation among the nations of the world of the true national idea, in which God is absolutely supreme, the world has never had yet. The Roman Catholic Church until this hour is attempting to fulfil that ideal, but it has materialised, paganised, degraded it. At the back of the degradation, at the back of the materialisation, at the back of the plague which swept over Christianity when a Roman Emperor espoused its cause, is the true ideal. Let no man imagine that anyone who has seen the great vision of the Church as God's nation can ever be satisfied with the division of Christianity into sects and denominations. It grieves the heart of Christ Himself. Some of us sigh and cry for the realization of the outward and manifest unity of that Church which is to be the holy nation of which Christ Himself is King. If I thus recognize the failure, I beg you to remember it is human failure. The fact abides, and its influence is felt, even though we have so sadly failed in the outward manifestation of that fact. The golden bowl of the Church's unity remains intact in the hand of God although the earthen vessel which symbolizes it has been shivered into a thousand fragments.

I am very much inclined to think that what we need, in these days especially, is to discover the underlying unity, and if we can but discover and realize the vital, radiant, glorious fact of the nation of God we shall soon forget the superficial divisions, which have grieved the heart of and have hindered His progress in the world. Let us keep in mind the fact that the nation which He came to build is great because He is building it.

Let us pass from that wider outlook to that which lies within it. Jesus was greater than Jacob in the benefit conferred. We go back to the illustration of the woman and Christ's answer thereto. Take the woman's example. It was a well in which a spring of water was pouring out the chiefest earthly blessing, yet earthly and material only. It seems to me as though I can hear the echo of Christ's word, full of tenderness and yet thrilling with a fine sarcasm, "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Write that over every cistern you hew for yourself. Write that over every method by which you attempt to satisfy the call and cry of your deepest life. "Thirst again." The well of Jacob was but a symbol. I will attempt to satisfy the cry of my soul with the gathering of gold: "Thirst again." I will attempt to answer the sob of my inner life by devoting myself to pleasure: "Thirst again." I will attempt to reply to the call of my nature by seeking for fame: "Thirst again." Write that over every attempt of human life to meet its need and satisfy itself on the level of earth, within the material. There was the well, dug into the earth, they had seen the water and were measuring it, and drinking of it, but there is the one word, "Thirst again." The materialisation of life, individually, socially, nationally, internationally; every attempt of humanity to live in dust and be content is to "Thirst again." There is the explanation of all the restlessness of this and every age, "Thirst again." What does Christ say by comparison. I will give thee "living water," touching the deepest thing of the human heart and affecting each phase of life from that profound centre. It shall be, said He, a spring within the life so that satisfaction shall not be sought in anything external to the life but in that which is within it, the deepest thing in the life, springing up within the life, leaping up, laughing up, and flowing forth. Yet it is a gift. It cannot be procured. It cannot be purchased; but those who have it shall never thirst again. Christ claims to stand confronting human life, able to give that which shall perfectly satisfy it, so that there shall be no thirst. It was a great claim. Like other things He said, it was either the most empty boast, or the most magnificent declaration that men ever heard. Said He to this woman as He talked with her by Sychar's well, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." Was this an empty boast? Has He been able to do it? You have noticed how often in both the Old and New Testaments you find this illustration of water. For supreme instance I go back to Ezekiel's vision and see the river that flows by the way of the altar out over the land, and everything lives where the river comes. Or I go to the Apocalypse of the New Testament and I see the river flowing from the throne of God. I come back to John's Gospel and I hear Jesus say, on the great day of the Feast, the eighth day of Tabernacles - when the priests no longer carried the vessels of water which symbolized the coming spiritual age which had not yet dawned; indicating by the omission that the promise was not fulfilled - "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "But this," John adds, "spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." So that we see at once that Christ claimed to give to man of that Spirit of God which in communion with his spirit brings rest and peace and satisfaction. "Never thirst." Put that over against the other word, "Thirst again." Is it true? Ask the centuries. No, we have no time! Ask this audience. Ask the witnesses who are here. How often we have sung the words, and they come back to us tonight, old, yet ever new

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,

'Behold, I freely give

The living water; thirsty one,

Stoop down, and drink, and live.'

I came to Jesus, and I drank

Of that life-giving stream;

My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,

And now I live in Him."

What is this quenching of thirst? It is the restoration of the individual soul to its right relationship to infinite and eternal things. It is the bringing back of that which God made, to the God Who made it. It is the answer of God to the cry of the sour as the soul trusts. Deeper than the call of the wild there is the call of God in every human life. The way we answer the call matters everything. To answer the deepest capacity of my inner life, which is a Divine capacity, by turning to the dust and ashes of sin, is not merely ruin to me, it is rebellion against God and high treason in the universe of God. The cry is there. There is a very profound sense in which it is true that every sin is man's attempt to answer a Divine capacity. The final illustration of it is in Paul's writing, "Be not drunken with wine ... but be filled with the Spirit." When a man turns to wine he is attempting to answer the thirst of his soul for the Spirit of God. I am not telling you it is right to turn to wine if you need the Spirit of God. I am not telling you it does not much matter. It matters everything. I am not telling you that if you follow the thirst for wine, and take wine, it will be all right. Not at all. "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot." Riot is wrong. The prostitution of a good thing is sin. At the back of the craving is a need for God. There is no sin you can think off but that deep down, as its inspiration, is a right and proper desire. Sin is the attempt to satisfy a proper craving in an improper way. When Christ comes to a man's life and gives him of His Spirit, touches him with that Spirit of God which is as a river of water, He puts all the natural within him into right relationship with God and henceforth instead of fever there is coolness, instead of riot there is right, instead of unrest there is rest, instead of thirst there is thirst quenched. Jacob is a type of all such as found nations upon a material basis. He will dig you wells and they are useful wells, but "thirst again" is the inscription written over them. Jesus came into the world to found a new nation, a spiritual nation, and the benefit conferred is that of restoring the life of man to its proper orbit and proper relationship, taking hold of the deep thing that lies behind the sin and setting it in its right direction, so that it finds its answer and goal, and knows nothing of riot. "Never thirst" is the great word of Christ.

Finally, greater therefore in His dealing with individuals. All that is already said in general terms. I ask you in conclusion to look at this woman. Take her as one illustration of two things. She was true to Jacob with a national pride, which manifested itself when she said to Jesus, "Art Thou greater than our father Jacob?" She was true to Jacob, but she was uninfluenced by him toward morality. Her relation to him as the founder of her nation, as she believed him to be, was not a relation which made her a pure woman. You know the story. With wonderful, inimitable art, Jesus turned her from all worshipful and religious discussion. A great many people who are hiding sin in their hearts are glad to hide it by discussing religion with you. I am told there is a new interest in religion. Thank God for it, but I think you need to be very careful that you are not trying to hide immorality behind your eagerness to discuss religion. That is what this woman was doing. Our Lord said, "Go, call thy husband." In a moment she knew that she was face to face with one who knew her, "I have no husband." Jesus answered, "Thou saidst well, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." Then "she left her water-pot," the symbol of relationship to the well of Jacob, and hurried back into the city. Do not forget the final stages of this story. When she reached the city she said to the men there, "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?" Further on we read, many of them "believed on Him because of the word of the woman." Do not forget that which is still further on, they persuaded Him to stay with them two days - Samaritans entertaining a Jew for two days! "And many more believed because of His word; and they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves." I care not whether through her word, or through His word, they believed. The woman who had been uninfluenced toward morality by Jacob is startled as Christ probes and sees into her heart, and turns, and becomes a messenger of helpfulness to others. The woman who was a reproach to the city because of her past life, becomes the herald of new mercy and new life when she has come into contact with Jesus. This is a parable, a sign, an indication of what he is perpetually doing. How many of us are trusting to names, the names of dead and gone leaders, and yet there is none "other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." You take this name and the Person for Whom the name stands, and you come into His presence, and He is not merely one of Whom we are proud with the pride this woman had in Jacob, but One Who first shames us, startles us, alarms us as He flashes upon us the light that shows He knows us, the One Who probes us; but also the One lifts us and remakes us.

Thus He begins the building of His nation, not by a Manifesto and a call to arms, but by gathering individual souls, dealing with their sin, giving them the living water, satisfying the craving of their nature, and then welding them into one holy fellowship, one great catholic Church, one holy nation over which He presides not merely as King for their benefit, but as King for the revelation of the glory of God to the world, that the other nations may walk in the light thereof. All the light in which the nations are walking today which is light indeed - is light which has come through this Christ and the people He has called to Himself and remade. Here is a marvellous revelation of the strength of His nation, that in spite of her failure, in spite of the fact that she has turned aside to the things of the world, in spite of the fact that she has allowed, and is today allowing herself to be captured by parties, in spite of all these things which are things of failure, she is the force which lifts, and makes toward the ultimate coming of the Kingdom of God which shall be the age of the world's salvation.

A greater than Jacob. Oh Samaritan woman, thou art answered by the realization in thine own soul of the greatness of the Man Who sits upon the well and talks with thee. It was a very simple thing, and yet a very surprising thing. Again at your leisure read the story. The disciples come back presently. Notice what John tells us, "They marveled that He was speaking with a woman." Now remember, it was in that connection He said the thing we so often quote, and I think forget the connection when we quote it, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." That is the connection. We quote it, and see its light flaming and flashing over all His wonderful life, and we are perfectly correct in so doing. We quote that passage, and say that it is the keynote of all His life. We apply it to His Cross finally, and all such application is correct, but do not forget the first connection. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." What is that? Taking time to sit on this well and talk to one lost woman that I may remake her. That is the master principle of Christ's kingship of the nation He builds.

Suffer me to say to some of my young friends here tonight for whom I have profound sympathy. There is burning in your heart a passion to do some great thing for God, and it is right. I have absolutely no patience with the man who attempts to check the enthusiasm of the dreaming boy. God has intended that our youth shall see visions, and it is part of the Divine economy that every young man and every young woman should see the morning bright and golden, but do not by looking for the far distant miss that in which it begins. If you would be as your Master, devote yourself to the will of God in service and begin with the first needy soul you meet. This meeting was a casual circumstance - speaking after the manner of men, there are none in the economy of God! "He must needs pass through Samaria," and that does not mean He went a long way round to reach it. That is quite a false idea. I have heard it said that Samaria was out of His way. Nothing of the kind. It was on His way. It was in the line of His journey. It was necessary to go that way. It was the right way. It is in the commonplace pathway that comes for souls to do God's will. One woman - "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." It was a great word. I emphasize it at the close because if we can see it we see how great He was as the Founder of a nation. It was because He was always content - and I know this is a faulty statement, you will detect the flaw and fling it away, because I cannot put the truth in any other way - He was always content to do the commonplace thing. Go back to the human life, eighteen years a village carpenter, content to do the commonplace thing. One woman - the crowds are waiting, yes, but He had time for the woman. Is it not true today that some of us are so busy with the crowds that we have not time for the one? It was that attention to detail, that infinite value set upon the individual, that sense that the will of God bound Him to illuminate the dark soul of one woman and build her into the Kingdom of God that made Him greater than Jacob. Jacob was hasty, restless. Christ was quiet and patient. So He has been building, building ever. If we would be in fellowship with Him, and if we would be members of His Church in the profoundest sense of the word, stones in His building through whom life proceeds to others, we must understand that we begin with the individual, and out of that attention to detail and attention to the profound thing of life, the nation rises and is built. May God give us to share in the building.