**VOLUME 6; CHAPTER 01 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**THE COMING OF THE WORD: Rejected or Received by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

*John 1:11,13*

PERHAPS ONE OF THE OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS OF Scripture is the simplicity with which the sublimest things are stated. There are times when one wonders whether we have not allowed the simplicity of this statement to rob us of the sense of awe which ought to possess us in the presence of the truth which it declares. In some senses the whole fact of the mission of our Lord by way of incarnation and all related thereto is perfectly and finally declared.

In this paragraph we have the third stage of one declaration; and all that which has preceded it is necessary to the full understanding of the sublimity and grandeur of these words of our text.

This prologue of the gospel of John opens with what I think I may without irreverence characterize as the most sublime and stupendous statement of the whole of the Divine library, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," a statement suddenly bringing us into the presence of matters that far transcend the possibility of human understanding, or interpretation. I venture to say in regard to this wonderful word at the opening of the gospel that one of the purposes of the Spirit in writing these sentences through John was to remind men that behind the fact of Christ are mysteries too sublime for their comprehension or final explanation, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That is an eternal fact, and therefore spiritual; and it is forever beyond the perfect comprehension of the finite mind.

Then follows a great parenthesis, in which John describes for us facts growing out of the eternal. In the opening word we have the statement of eternal facts concerning our Lord and Master, and immediately following we have the statement of temporal facts, that is, facts related to time. Time is but a term of human and finite life. There is a sense in which it would be accurate to say that in the being of God time is not. "The same was in the beginning with God," and in those words we are carried far down from the sublime, stupendous height of the first verse; for this beginning is the beginning of Genesis, of creation. Yet we see the same Person present when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy in the presence of the wonder of primal creation.

The apostle continues, and declares that the One Who was there has continued through all the processes of that which He originally created; nothing has been created subsequently, or by any development, or by new intrusion of power, apart from this selfsame Person. Then he inclusively affirms that He is the fountain of all life, in the words "In Him was life." Life in man became light as it is in no other part of the creation. Nothing in creation apart from man has light in that sense. Nothing in creation looks back into the face of the Creator and is capable of knowing the Creator.

Coming still further down in the order of statement, the apostle tells us that this selfsame One, the Word, the Light, has ever been in the world, even though the world has not known Him.

Then, at last, having made these statements concerning the far-flung splendors of the age-abiding past, and concerning the mystic, mighty processes of all creation, he declares that He, the One from Whom all things came, "came unto His own." The whole tragedy of human sin, if we can but understand it, is packed into the next word, "They that were His own received Him not." The whole glory of infinite grace sings its anthem into the word immediately following, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God."

Now let us try to fix our attention on the last fact. Leaving behind us all the mystery and glory of the eternal fact that He was with God and was God, leaving behind us from this moment all the mystery and glory of the process of creation, and that through all time He was in the world though the world knew Him not, we come to that central fact of human history, that He came, and that He came to His own.

In order to have a clear understanding of the teaching, we need to distinguish carefully between the two phrases which in our versions and in our translations appear to be identical, "His own." The phrase is twice repeated, "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not." As a matter of fact, there is a very clear distinction between these two phrases, as all those familiar with the Greek New Testament, or the Vulgate, where the difference has been most carefully maintained, will recognize. "He came unto His own" - there the word is neuter - "and they that were His own" - there the word is masculine - "received Him not." I draw attention to the distinction in order that we may see how inclusive and comprehensive a declaration that is. "He came unto His own" - there the reference is not to people but to place. There are those who suggest that this should read, He came unto His own land. Bishop Westcott suggests that it should read, "He came unto His own home." I feel that neither is quite final, or quite satisfactory. Perhaps I have no right to say this, because I cannot supply the word that seems to be necessary. "He came unto His own"; why not leave it there? Or perhaps we take it as having application to the Creation, His own creation.

"And they that were His own received Him not"; there the masculine form stands for people, and is most certainly used in reference to that peculiar and separated people in the midst of human history which had been created a people for the purposes of God in reaching the world, and witnessing to Himself; and ultimately for the coming of Messiah, Who should be the Saviour of the world, the One for Whom the salvation of Jacob and the calling back of Israel was too light a thing according to Isaiah, and Who should be set for the proclamation of salvation to the ends of the earth.

He came unto His own land, if you will, home if you will; or, in the larger sense which reveals the economy and purpose of God, to His own creation; and His own people - in the midst of His own creation, those to whom after the flesh He did belong, those who constituted God's elect people for the purpose of revelation and who had so disastrously failed - received Him not. He came, the Messiah, Shiloh, the Branch, infinitely more than any prophet had dreamed or known. He came descended from David, according to Jewish genealogy, to exercise His ministry among His own, these people chosen for the purposes of the Divine economy. He spoke in the Jewish synagogues, He referred to the children's bread being given to the dogs; and He lived in the midst of degeneration, and in circumstances of limitation, but in perfect harmony with God in His own life. With what result? "His own received Him not." They tried to entangle Him in His talk, and His very own, the men of Nazareth, would fain have thrust Him headlong down the hill and destroyed Him; and, at last, to make the whole tragedy brief in reverent statement, they delivered Him to Roman rule, and clamored for His blood. The end, on the human side, of that which we celebrate today, the coming into human history of the Child Who lay in a manger, was the Cross.

I know the difficulty and imperfection of that survey. No man in this house is more conscious of it than I am. The infinite past - to us past, but to God ever present - the beginning; and the word suggests our limitation, for there is no beginning with Him and no end; but therein the infinite mystery of the Person. Then creation, the stars singing, or if we did but dare to translate the Hebrew literally and accurately, the stars vibrating, and the angels singing, and presiding over all the mystic, majestic processes, this same Person. At last, because of human failure, and human sin, He came in circumstances of such lowliness that you may tell the whole tragedy of His human life in brief, brutal chapters. Chapter one, No room in the inn! Chapter two, The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head! Chapter three, Crucify Him! Chapter four, A borrowed grave in a rich man's garden! If we could come to these things as we ought, and see them as they are, in the light of all the infinite glory with which John's gospel opens, then we should know what sin is, and how far humanity has sunk, and how profound and appalling is the ruin of human nature. "He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not."

Was His coming, then, a failure? Were all those years of toil for nought? Was that unveiling of Light, by its veiling, of no avail? Let us go again reverently to the culmination of it all, and behold the Man, despised, rejected, bruised, dead! "His own received Him not! "

But there were some who received Him. There were some who believed in His name. There were those who turned and followed Him imperfectly, but they followed; falteringly, but they followed; unworthily, but they followed! What of them? "To them gave He the right to become children of God." Some of us this morning meditated the anthem of the angels over the new race,

Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased,

that is, among the children of God who result from the presence in the world of this One, those who have the new life. Again, above the glory of the declaration of His coming, and the tragedy of the story of human refusal, we listen to the gospel. Here it is, singing to us even out of the wonders of John's prologue, "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." Let us endeavor to understand this better by considering the privileges and responsibilities of children.

What are the privileges of children? Is my word the best one here? I hardly think so in relation to the first fact, for something deeper than privilege is the first note. Children are such as partake of their father's nature. That is the infinite, profound mystery of the thing resulting from the coming of our Lord. He gave men the right to become children of God. He made those to whom He gave that right, partakers - and do not be afraid of the word, it is Peter's word in his letter - partakers of the Divine nature. Adoption is a word of the New Testament, a great and gracious word, but it is not exhaustive if we attempt to interpret it by what we know of adoption. In very love you may adopt a child which is not your own, you may give it all the things it would have had, had it been your own child; but you cannot give it your nature. So far as that is true, your adoption fails to describe the new relation resulting when a man receives the rejected Saviour, which is that He gives that one the right, not to call himself, but to become, a child of God.

Let us think of this. Are you a child of God? Then already you are a partaker of His nature. I state it so because it is an amazing declaration. Sometimes the heart is tempted to be fearful and afraid in the presence of such revelations or statements of Scripture because we are so conscious of being unlike God. Think again, and always think patiently of your own life as a believer, with God's patience. What is the Divine nature? It is essentially love. It is therefore holiness. It is also infinite wisdom. Every child of God partakes of these facts of the Divine nature. Every child of God becomes in measure love-centered, in measure holy, in measure wise with the wisdom of eternity. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Let that principle be remembered by all such as tremble in the presence of the great revelation.

Think again. A man who becomes a son of God, a woman who becomes a daughter of God; men and women who become children of God, immediately share His nature of love. Here is something that has often been pointed out, and it cannot be too often repeated. The first movement of communicated life of the nature of God to the soul of a human being is a love movement; the first true consciousness of the Divine nature in the soul of a man is one that negatives self and reaches out in strong desire to help another. Children of God, sharers of the Divine nature, primarily, fundamentally, are men and women first of all in whom love becomes the central fact.

It is equally true that the child of God has as desire, as impulse, as the central inspiration, a passion for holiness; but, oh, how we fail, how we sin, those of us who bear His name! But God understands - and it is true - that we do not want to sin. That is the life of God within us, the holy seed that cannot sin, that within us which is against sin. In all the complexity of our personalities that is the deepest thing. We sin against it, violate it, wander into bypaths; but that passion for holiness, the strong, urgent desire after purity, is the sharing of the Divine nature, and it is the result of having become a child of God, because we have received the rejected Christ.

We share also the wisdom of God. This I need not stay to argue, but I ask you to remember it in this way: the moment a man shares His life, becomes a son of God, in that very moment he knows things which before he did not know, he has an absolute assurance and certainty of things which before he wondered about. That is why, if you are not a Christian man, you cannot understand the quietness and peace of the man who is a Christian. I do not say that the truly Christian man has no intellectual difficulty, no problem of the mind; but I do say that no argument can shake his confidence, or remove his trust. It is sharing the nature that brings new wisdom, new comprehension, new certainty.

The child is a partaker of the father's nature. The love of God becomes the central fact in the life of the child of God; His life creates the passion for holiness, and the wisdom of God is communicated to the soul, so that it enters into absolute assurance of things not seen and which never can demonstrated by the processes of the logician, or be made certain by the argument of the senses. These are some of the first and fundamental values of this great word of John.

But children - and these are the implications of the text - are the recipients of the father's love and especial care. They are the special treasure of the Father, God's treasures. We have sometimes said that God condescends to take our name, "father," in order to teach us what He is. There is an element of truth in it; but I do not think that is the profoundest way to state the truth. I would rather say that God lent us His name, "Father," in order to teach us what we ought to be to our children. Yet it is perfectly fair to take argument in the other way. If tonight, buffeted, bruised, storm-tossed, lonely man or woman, you want to know what your Father feels toward you, if you are a father or mother, remember that your care for your child, your thought for your child, your patience with your child, your undying, unquenchable love for your child, all is but the faint shadow of God's love for you. He never forgets us, never abandons us, never gives us up.

Another implication is that children of God are heirs of their Father. That is stated explicitly in Scripture, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. All His treasures are ours and are at our disposal so far as we are able to use them. He has treasures He will not give us yet because we do not know their value or use, and therefore possession would but harm us. He withholds nothing from us which would be for our healing, helping, and happiness. He Who spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us, shall He not with His Son freely give us all things? The world with its store of wonders untold is ours. We enter into the treasure-house of snow and ice, and all the wealth of creation. He Who was and is the Word, the Son of God, God the Son through Whom creation came, has brought us into the same relationship to His Father as He Himself is bearing, and we have entered into all the riches of God.

Again, children have a right to the Father's home. One does not often dwell on this fact, perhaps not enough. The saintly Rutherford said, We dwell too much in the wilderness, and lift our eyes too little to the city to which we go. It is good sometimes to enter the city, walk its streets in imagination, and examine the dwelling places, and become familiar with the habits of the home that lies beyond. His home is ours. Homeless the children of God can never be.

A tent or a cottage, what need I care?

They are building a palace for me over there.

He is preparing a place, but it is in one of the Father's many places, and all the home of God is ours.

Such privileges bring corresponding responsibilities. The first responsibility of the child to the father is that of the obedience of perfect love. Put it that way, think of it in that way. Think no longer of Him only as King, though King He is; think of Him no longer merely as Judge, though Judge He surely is; think no more of Him solely as Law- giver, though Law-giver He certainly is; but remember He is Father, and that interprets the government of the King, and explains the method of the Judge, and unlocks the secret of the law. Therefore, as His child, let me hasten in the way of His commandments and let the answer of my life be the obedience of my love.

We have another responsibility for a little while, not only that of the obedience of personal relationship, but that of the honor of His name and character in the presence of His enemies. As the son of a famous house will move out to the ends of the earth and never forget the name he bears, so surely we who bear His name, and share this nature, must remember that upon us depends the honor of the name we as we move among the sons of men, as children of God.

Now hear this final word. "He gave the right to become children of God." The word suggests man's helplessness. The word reveals the fact that having come to His own and being rejected by His own, and being rejected of the whole world, all those who had rejected Him, by that very rejection had manifested the fact of their distance from God. The word, then, first implies man's utter helplessness. How far away man is from God!

The word next implies Christ's power to communicate. "To them gave He the right to become children of God." How? The next verse is the full and final answer to that inquiry, "which were begotten, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." There we are face to face with the mystic, central miracle of Christianity, which defies all analysis and explains all Christian phenomena; that is the central thing, begotten of God, that which cannot be seen in its happening, but which is demonstrated by the results it produces. The rejected Son of God is received by that man, believed on by that man, and that man is there and then not by his own act or will, but by the answer of omnipotent power, begotten. That is the central secret. This right to become children of God is not merely sentimental; it is not merely a covenant made between two; it is a vital fact.

Some man listening to this word, meditating the word here in the sanctuary, will come to the hour of decision, will receive the Saviour, and even though there be no lightning flash, no roll of reverberating thunder, that man will be begotten, born again, touched in the inner deep mystery of His life with the life of God, changed in his very nature. This is the mystic miracle of Christianity, Christ's power to communicate life.

Wherein lies His power to communicate life? Not in the fact of His eternal nature. Not in the fact of His creative ability. But in the fact of His Cross! Let Him interpret Himself, and let Him do it through this gospel of John, "I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." What for? To give it to the sheep, for that is the setting of this declaration, to communicate His very life to others.

What word shall I use? Suffer me this, it is very imperfect, but I know no perfect word, to liberate it through the mystery and tragedy of His death, that He might give it to men, and that they might share it, and come by the Cross and by the Cross alone into living union with Himself, and thus become children of God by virtue of the fact that they have His life, the life of the only begotten Son of God. He gave them, who were begotten, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of the will of God, the right to become the children of God.

That implies our authority, nay, declares it, to be children of God. It is a right based on power, on life, on identification. Unless I share Christ's life I am not a Christian. Though I sing the songs, though I make a great profession, unless I share Christ's life, I am not a child of God.

What, then, is the final word of this meditation? What are the conditions on which a man, a member of the rebelling, refusing, sinning race may become a child of God? "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." Then, in order that there may be no mistake - I am thankful always for this interpretation - "even to them that believe on His name." Take the two phrases and use the one which helps you most, to receive Him, or to believe on His name. What is it to believe on His name? To receive Him. What is it to receive Him? To believe on His name. Avail yourself of that which helps you most, now at moment. Receive Him, for He is rejected today. We sometimes read, If Christ came to Chicago - If Christ came to London. I do not like the suggestion, for it is false. He is in Chicago, He is in London. Yet let me borrow the idea for brief moment. If He came what would London do with Him? London would not crucify Him in the way they did of old; but it would get rid of Him! Christ is rejected today. The human heart is still in enmity against God. Man is still fast bound in sin and nature's night, in spite of all his progress and intellectual advancement. Christ is rejected. We know it. There are whole circles of what we call cultured and refined society which, alas, and alas for the blasphemy of it, are celebrating Christmas who will have none of Christ. His very name is taboo, not to be mentioned! He is the rejected One.

Will you receive Him? Will you find room in your heart and life for the One for Whom there was no room in the inn of old? Will you crown Him Lord of your life? Will you yield all your being, bruised and battered and broken by your sin, incapable of finding God by your own wit and wisdom? Will you crown Him? Then to you He will give right to become a child of God! And mark the spaciousness of it, whatever your theory may be, whatever your doctrine about sovereignty, elections, reprobations - all of which are true if you understand them - "as many as received Him!" Rich or poor, bond or free, black or white, these are incidental things that matter nothing; but a sharp dividing line is running through this audience tonight in the eyes of God between the man who has received Him and the man who has refused Him. Where are you? "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God." If you passed into this place tonight, reverent, interested, but nothing more, will you now receive Him, believe on His name and all the name stands for? Will you give Him your life and let Him come into your life and master it? Then, when you pass from this building and walk the streets, you will be a child of God.

What is the application of all this? The first application is to the children of God. Let us answer by unqualified surrender. What is the application of this to those who are His, but are wandering away, backsliding, if I may use the word that we all know? It is this. He is waiting to receive you again. His word to you is "I have somewhat against thee, that thou hast left thy first love." But this also, "Repent, and do the first works." Come back as you came at the beginning, and the word of gracious promise is, "I will heal all thy backsliding, and love thee freely."

The last word is to the man, the woman, young or old, in this house, who never yet has received Him. You have heard the Christmas bells again, and the Christmas carols, and you are entering into all the merriment of Christmas which may have in it much of blasphemy; but will you open the door of your heart and let Him in? Then He will keep Christmas with you, and you with Him, in the fellowship of the one life, He the Son of God, and you the child of God.