**VOLUME 9; CHAPTER 16 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**CHRIST JESUS, THE LORD by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*For we preach ... Christ Jesus as Lord ...*

*2 Corinthians 4:5*

THERE IS NO HUMAN INTEREST WITH WHICH CHRISTIANITY DOES not deal. It comes in love with light and life to the whole circumference of things. It speaks with authority concerning all the facts of the material and moral universe.

As to the material, Christianity first halts men on the threshold of investigation and conditions their attitude through all the processes by affirming God in the language in which the Book of the Christian opens, "In the beginning God …"; it also declares that His glory is the consummation of purpose in the material realm.

In the moral realm, Christianity declares the eternal principles which are the standards of creed, and therefore of character, and ultimately therefore of conduct.

These imperial values of Christianity in the abstract are the direct issue of the supernal royalty of Christ. The it in Christianity is the result of the Him. Christianity is Christ crowned.

Christianity is the religion of a Book of which Christ is the one Subject. Christianity is the religion of this world, and because of this world Christ is at once the Source, the Sustainer, and the Goal. Christianity is the realization of truth in the material, moral, and spiritual realms, and Christ Himself is Truth. It follows as a necessary sequence that for the creation of Christian conditions in life, personal, social, national or racial, there must be submission to Christ. Therefore, the message of the Christian pulpit, of the Christian church, is that indicated by the words of my text, "For we preach … Christ Jesus as Lord. ..."

To that theme I invite your attention, and I shall ask you to follow me along three lines of consideration; first, of the person of this Lord Christ Jesus; second, of His purpose; finally of His power.

What, then, is the Person of the Lord as presented in the New Testament? The apostle speaks of Him here as Jesus. Who is Jesus, according to the gospel narratives? I am not now going to argue for the truth of the things affirmed. I simply desire to state them.

Jesus of Nazareth was directly created by God through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Just as the first man according to the account of Scripture was created from the material, so was the second Man; only, instead of the dust of the ground, the seed of the woman was made the basis of the Divine creation. He came into human history a Man of humanity and yet distinct from it; not by the will of man nor by the act of man, but by the will and act of God; peculiar, different in that creation, and yet identified with humanity in all the essentials of human nature. This is the Man to Whom Paul is referring when he says, "… we preach … Christ Jesus as Lord …"

I go back again to the gospel stories, and as I carefully observe Him in the doings and teachings of His human life there are certain things which impress me.

The first is that He was a Man whose life was perfectly adjusted toward God and therefore perfectly adjusted toward His fellow men. He always spoke of God with reverence, and yet with almost amazing familiarity; spoke of Him as His Father, made incidental references to Him which showed that in His conception God was touching all life at every point. Flowers; your Father clothes them. Sparrows; your Father is with them when they die. Children; their angels do always behold the face of the Father in heaven. All through His speech we find Him recognizing God; familiar with God; seeing God everywhere. All these beatitudes of this ethical manifesto may be woven into a perfect chaplet, the first resting place of which is on the brow of the Man Who uttered them. And this is conspicuously true of the one which says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." He was a Man always in the presence of God, always conscious of Him, seeing Him everywhere, and that without a trace of fear in His heart.

Therefore He was a Man Whose life was perfectly adjusted toward His fellow men, in righteousness, in truth, in simplicity, in strength, in sympathy.

The Man presented to our vision in the New Testament was also a Man perfectly balanced within Himself, a Man in Whom there was nothing grotesque. Any man who develops one side of his nature at the expense of all the rest is grotesque. In Christ I see Man perfectly balanced with all essential qualities developed. I would like to take time to defend that statement, especially with regard to the physical. I differ entirely from the conceptions of most of the great artists concerning Jesus Christ. Have you ever seen a picture of Christ that satisfied you? I never have. The majority of artists have presented Him as weak, anemic. Hoffmann satisfies me most. Yet I would add to his portrait a physical Christ of greater beauty. It may be objected that the Scriptures say, "… when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him." That does not mean that He was devoid of beauty, but rather that men were so blind that they could not see it. Moreover, the thought of the prophet there was surely spiritual rather than material. Still another declares His face was more marred than any other. Yes, but have you never seen a beautiful face marred with lines of sorrow and suffering? I believe that in His physical life, Jesus was a Man of great and perfect dignity of beauty.

Turning to the mental side, we cannot but be astonished by the dignity and grandeur of His mental conceptions. Take an illustration on a low level. Clever men constantly endeavored to entrap Him in His talk. Do we ever find Him entrapped? I am overwhelmed again and again, not by His adroitness as though He were subtle and cunning, but by the transparency of His mental method with men, until at last it is written, "… no man after that durst ask Him any question."

If I turn to the spiritual, no argument is needed. His conceptions of God, of the eternal ages, of man's spiritual nature; His interpretation of all the things of the eternities are final. No man has gone one single inch beyond His thinking about God and eternity.

While He was thus perfect in each side of His manhood, He was most perfectly balanced and perfectly fulfilled the functions of human life. No ascetic was He. The men of His own age said He was a gluttonous man and a winebibber. So freely did He mix with men in the ordinary affairs of every-day life that the religious teachers of His age imagined that He was an utterly irreligious man. Yet as we look at Him, we see a Man; King of the race, perfect in His Manhood.

Whatever your difficulties may be concerning the doctrines of the Catholic church, I challenge you at this point; find me a man in all history or in imaginative literature who begins to compare with Him, If He never lived, the men who dreamed Him were the greatest dreamers the world has ever seen. They have presented to us One Who in the ideal His life presents, holds enthraled the honest admiration of all men in this and every age.

This, however, is not the final thing the Scriptures say of Him. They declare Him to be the Son of God, not as other men are the sons of God, but in a peculiar and mystic relationship which is revealed to us in the writings of this same man Paul as in none of the other writings of the New Testament. In the Philippian letter when declaring how He came into human observation, Paul says that originally He was in the form of God; that He did not count that high, exalted method of manifestation a prize to be snatched at for self-enrichment, and then that He took the form of a servant. In reading that passage we must keep the mind fixed carefully on the one Person referred to from beginning to end. There is no change of nature suggested in the process described. It is the same Person Who, being in the form of God, came into human observation by taking another form - not another nature but another method of manifestation, a method adapted to human comprehension, and was made in fashion as a man. Therefore, when I look at the Man of Nazareth in the light of New Testament teaching, I see not only perfect humanity, but veiled Deity; the Son of God incorporated in human life as never before; able to act with God for men for specific purpose.

What does the New Testament say concerning the office of this Person? First, that He came for revelation of God through a channel within the possibility of human comprehension. He came in order that men might look upon One of their own kind and so see God Whom they had never seen. I think it well to make this distinction. By incarnation God did not come nearer to men. He came into observation. God has always been near man.

There are men today who know God. There are also men who do not know God. God is no nearer to the man who knows Him than to the man who knows Him not. It is true of all men and women that in God they live and move and have their being.

Go back to the palace of King Belshazzar, and see him carousing with his lords, violating all the laws of decency. Now watch the mystic handwriting upon the wall, and hear the charge against him, "… the God in whose hand thy breath is, … hast thou not glorified." Belchazzar's breath, foul with obscenity, in the hand of God! No man gets away from God. In God every man lives and moves and has his being, yet men today have no knowledge of Him, no consciousness of Him. In Christ, God came out of His hiding place that men might see Him. In our thinking of God, we may build up our conception upon the basis of that perfect humanity. Throw out the lines into eternity, and they include all the truth about God. The tears of Jesus are the revelations of the agony of God. The tender touch of Jesus is that by which man knows how gentle God can be. The stern severity of the words that scorched like fire as they fell from the lips of Jesus unveil God's holiness and His wrath abiding upon sin. The wooing, winsome words in which He called to weary and heavy laden men were the very speech of God calling men back to His bosom, back to His heart, He came for revelation.

He came for more. He came according to the teaching of the New Testament for redemption; redemption wrought through His identification with sinning men to the last issue of their sin. I know how incomplete that statement is, yet ponder it well. I listen to that strangest, profoundest word that fell from the lips of Jesus as He was dying on Calvary, "… my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I am always afraid to begin to interpret the meaning of those words. The very question they ask suggests mystery even in the mind of the dying One, and who am I that I should try to unveil the hidden mystery? Yet, listening to the words, they forevermore suggest to me the ultimate issue of sin. It was the language of sin in its last experience. It was the language of sorrow at its profoundest depth. It was a word which expressed the most unutterable experience that ever comes into human life, the experience of an unexplained mystery of silence. He was identified with man in his sin to its last issue. In the transaction of the Cross He so dealt with sin that I come to that Cross, and while men are discussing the atonement, I know that my sins are not merely pardoned, but canceled, made not to be. In the presence of that Cross I find that heart's-ease, notwithstanding sin, which I can find nowhere else.

So that this Man upon Whom we look, perfect in His humanity, mystic in His Deity, flaming in His revelation of God; in deep, dense darkness that I can never fathom, so wrought that this poor, broken heart, buffeted by reason of its sin finds healing and rest. That is the Person presented in these gospel stories; presented finally in the full dignity of this great and wonderful description, the Lord Jesus Christ. Of Him the apostle says: "… we preach Christ Jesus as Lord …" Lord by the victory of life and death; Lord by the appointment of God; Lord by the administration of the Holy Spirit.

Let me now pass to a brief word as to the purpose of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the teaching of Scripture.

What was the passion of Jesus Christ? I am not now referring to the ultimate mystery of that passion baptism whereby He redeemed men. What was the master-passion or the master-motive of the life of Jesus? That is not an easy question. I sometimes think we find the difficulty of it if we ask it about ourselves. What is our master-motive? There is one in every human life. We give as reasons for the things we do things which are not the reasons for the things we do. We give second or third causes for the things we do as final. They are not. If we could get back to the underlying conception of life that masters us, we should have the true answer.

What was the underlying conception of Jesus, the motive of everything, the master-passion of His life? I answer the inquiry in one brief phrase, the Kingdom of God. To some that may seem a very insufficient answer. The reason is that we have taken the phrase the Kingdom of God and materialized it until we imagine it only refers to the establishment of a beneficent order in the world. The phrase is greater than that. To say the Kingdom of God is to say everything. To say that the master-passion, the motive of the life of Jesus was the Kingdom of God is to touch the deepest, profoundest thing in all His life. We might be inclined to say that the motive of His life is best stated in His own words, "… the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." That, however, was not the deepest thing. He was full of compassion for men, but there is a profounder depth. The deepest thing in His life was expressed in prophetic language long before He came in flesh, and this is it: "… I am come to do thy will, O God." He emphasized it in the prayer He taught His disciples. He said, "… when ye pray, say Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." He came not so much to save men as for the glory of God. We are all in danger in these days of laying the emphasis elsewhere. No one will imagine I am undervaluing His compassion. But that ministry which culminated in the Cross was for the glory of God and the establishment of His Kingdom; for the vindication of God's character in the world and the universe in answer to the slander which lies at the heart of evil. The Devil came into human life by slander; "… hath God said …?" and there lurked in the question the suggestion that God was withholding something good from humanity. Jesus Christ came to give the lie to that lie; to reconcile to God all things in earth and in heaven. Not merely this little planet of ours, but the whole universe was involved and touched by the ministry and passion of this King of the race.

The master-passion of Christ, then, was that of the Kingdom of God. His motive in all that He does for me is that I should be in that Kingdom, submitted to it, realizing it, manifesting it. That is His passion for the world at large. It is His motive in all His ministry in the wide universe of God. That is a great declaration in the writings of Paul in which He speaks of the day when "… he shall deliver up the kingdom to God." For that day He came, He lived, He toiled, He suffered, He died, He rose, and He waits in patience, and at last He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; not merely when He has redeemed humanity, but when He delivers the Kingdom to His Father. The master-passion of all the life and ministry of Jesus is that of the Kingdom of God.

While that is the ultimate purpose, notice, still within the thought of purpose, His method so far as we are concerned. I do not think that can be better stated than in the line of the hymn:

He is my Prophet, Priest, and King.

Take these three words, and think of all they suggest.

The work of the prophet is that of declaration, proclamation, revelation. So He began proclaiming, declaring, revealing, and He said enough. Obey His words in your life, and your life is in the Kingdom of God. Obey His words in civic and national life, and they alike conform to the Kingdom of God.

Never forget that even in these days when men are denying certain facts concerning Him, denying the supernatural facts which we believe lie at the heart of our religion concerning this Lord Christ, they are still claiming that the Sermon on the Mount is a perfect law of life. It was His proclamation of the Kingdom of God. That marvelous and awe-inspiring ethic was His prophetic forthtelling to the world of the will of God. He was a Prophet proclaiming.

He was also a Priest. If the word "prophet" suggest proclamation, the word "priest" suggests propitiation. Again we have a word which we need to use very reverently. It proclaims His work in redemption. As I affirmed concerning His prophetic work that He said enough, so I affirm concerning His priestly work that He did enough. There is nothing to be done beyond that which He has done. I do not want to argue it. If I did and were to test the declaration by the witnesses, thank God, they are here. I could call witnesses to the truth of it. He breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the prisoner free. The thing that mastered me, gripped me, poisoned me, the thing I could not escape from, He has overcome, and it is underneath my feet. I have been made master of the very forces which mastered me. He has provided redemption, plenteous redemption. He not only said enough, He did enough.

Finally, He is King. That is administration, realization. Men say He is not crowned. Let there be no sigh when you say it. Hear the ancient prophetic word, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for His law." "We see not yet all things put under Him … But we see Jesus …" To see Jesus is to be perfectly sure that His work as King will be brought to ultimate victory because of His work as Prophet and as Priest.

What, according to Scripture, is His program? The day of grace, the day of judgment following it, and then the establishment of government and the handing of the Kingdom to His Father. The day of grace is that in which we live. There is a day of judgment coming. I do not mean a day of twenty-four hours, an assize. I mean a method of judgment in the world for the establishment of His Kingdom. We half-quote a great many passages of Scripture. Do you remember when Jesus was reading in the synagogue from the prophecy of Isaiah concerning His own ministry, where He stopped? He read these significant words: "… to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. …" and He closed the Book. Reverently, let me open the Book again at the verse where He closed it. What do I find? After the words "the acceptable the day of year of the Lord" there is a comma, and then "… the day of vengeance of our God …" As surely as He came to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, He will come to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God. How long the day of judgment will last, none can tell. It will in all probability be brief, for judgment is ever His strange act. But it must come. I have no greater comfort than to believe that. It is for that day of judgment I as often pray as for any tender, merciful deliverance of the saints. What this world supremely needs is the rod of iron, which is not a rod of cruelty but an inflexible rod of strict and absolute justice. He is coming so to reign. I at least cannot lose the vision of the coming reign when I think of this King. It is in His program. It is not the last method. There are other methods, other dispensations stretching away beyond. It is not for us to waste time speculating. Our duty is to fulfil our present responsibility which is that of preaching the gospel of His grace, for the gathering of His own, and for the preparation of the world for that larger establishment of the Kingdom that lies beyond.

Finally, as we have tried to glance at the Person and to consider the purpose, let me in a last word speak of the power of this Lord Christ. What is the nature of the power of the King? First it is spiritual in essence, dealing fundamentally with the deepest facts of the human life, and second, it is regenerative in operation.

Spiritual in essence. They wanted to make Him King while He was upon the earth on the basis of material supply, but He would have none of it. He fed the multitudes, and they desired to take Him by force and make Him King, but He hurried His disciples away across the sea, and Himself climbed the mountain. He will never be made King on that basis. There are men today who would make Him King if He would find them work, and give them food, and supply all their material needs. He will do all that when they come into the Kingdom, but He does not begin there. He begins not with the incidental of the flesh but with the essential of the spirit. He comes to set up God's kingdom not by force of arms, by policy or cunning, by bribery or corruption, but by dealing with the spiritual center of life, by bringing the being back into right relation with God.

On the basis of the remade, reborn spirit of man, He reconstructs everything else. So He has proceeded through the centuries, and we count His method slow. The slowness of God is due to the longsuffering of God. It is also on account of the fact that He must begin with the spiritual fact at the center. So He begins with me. It is sometimes argued as to whether heredity or environment is the stronger force. I am perfectly in sympathy with the view that environment is a far stronger force than heredity, but environment is not enough. Put a man in an environment, and you may lift him just a little higher. It is very valuable, but you cannot remake the man by environment, and unless you begin with something in the man that is essential he will degrade the new environment into which you put him. Jesus Christ is a King Who begins with the essential fact. He is not going to be made your King by bribing you with bread and work. He claims the allegiance of the spiritual essence of your being, and when He gets it, then, according to His own great word, "… seek ye first His kingdom … and all these things shall. . . be added unto you." He has never yet failed in His promise. He begins at the center with the spiritual life. There are men who have lost consciousness of their own spiritual nature, men who have no vision of God, and who say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." He comes to such lives, to such spiritual natures as have lost consciousness of God and of themselves, and what is His first business? To quicken them. "… you hath He quickened, …" That is the first thing. He brings a man to the consciousness of God and of his own spiritual life. In the same moment and upon that basis, He begins the great work of reconstruction. Regeneration means the destruction of the destroying forces and the reconstruction of the essential nature of man. So Christ comes to carry out this work. That is the nature of His work.

Again, what is the extent of His work? It is limitless and it is limited. It is limitless as it proceeds from the spiritual to the material. There is no point that it does not touch. The remade man in his spiritual life is a man who is rendered capable of the reconstruction of his mental life. The remade man in spiritual life is a man capable of reconstruction in his own physical life. He will also go into the wilderness and make it blossom as the rose; He will go into the midst of groaning creation and heal it.

Christ begins in the center, and from that regenerated center, the forces of renewal pass out through all the life. Remade spiritually, renewed mentally, with all the forces of your physical life under the control of the Spirit, your home will become a different home, the neighborhood in which you live will feel the influence of your life. Waves of influence proceeding from reconstructed spirituality will pass out through the whole world.

In what sense is He limited? As to the nature of the effect He produces in the life of men. I do not say He is limited in the production of effect, but that He is limited in the nature of the effect He produces. You cannot come face to face with the Lord Christ and be the same afterward. You can, however, decide what the nature of the effect He produces is going to be upon your life. You come face to face with Christ and with His claim, and then you make your choice, and on that choice depends the nature of the effect He produces. His gospel is a savor of life unto life or of death unto death.

Even if you have seen nothing in Him save the life of ideal beauty, then what are you going to do with it? To accept it is to follow Him and to be remade by His power. To refuse is to choose the low and to be degraded. Christ is limited by our choice, our decision, our will.

Let my last word be this about His power. His power is inevitable. It is beneficent if we so choose; it is destructive if we so choose. "… we preach … Christ Jesus as Lord …" We preach Him not as One Who lived and died and passed away but as the living One. The mystic touch of His hand is still upon our hearts. We are conscious of our nearness to God, to the great Revealer, the great Redeemer.

Let us crown the Person of the Lord and so know His power working in our lives, and from henceforth share His purpose and by falling into line we march with Him toward the goal of the ages, the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

I pray those of you who have known Him longest join with me and crown Him anew and so anew receive His power and as never before be one with Him in the passion of His heart to see the Kingdom established.

And you who never yet have crowned Him now, in the silence, without sign or sound or symbol, do this and you shall know His power, and cooperate in His purpose.