**VOLUME 10; CHAPTER 15 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**LED OUT - LED IN by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*He led them out until they were over against Bethany: and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.*

*Luke 24:50*

AFTER HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD, OUR LORD AND Saviour Jesus Christ lingered on the earth for forty days, as though He were almost reluctant to leave it. He lingered, as we have no doubt, for very special purposes of revelation and manifestation, lingered in order to bridge over for His own first disciples the difficult period of the early days, when they would no longer have Him with them in bodily sight, and when it would be necessary, therefore, for the high faculty of the soul, faith, to be called into full play. He lingered for forty days, occasionally appearing and disappearing. The second part of the statement seems as though it were unnecessary, but, as a matter of fact, the disappearances were as important as the appearances, in both their manner and their purpose. He appeared to them sometimes when gathered together peculiarly as disciples, and sometimes to individuals. Coming suddenly and unexpectedly upon them, baffling them by the method of His coming, He yet always unveiled before their eyes some new wonder and glory of His own Personality and His own work. Then, with equal suddenness and strangeness of method, He vanished. This lasted, as I say, for forty days.

In the verse that I have taken as text we have the account of the very last act of Jesus before His Ascension. This was His last appearance, as the last disappearance was the Ascension itself. We are now to consider what these men saw in Him on this occasion: "He led them out as far as Bethany: and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them."

This Person, lifting His hands in blessing, is One who has been rejected in a threefold rejection: rejected by the priesthood of the time, rejected by the earthly government which was in the ascendancy at the time, rejected by the people on their own vote and claim. I am not now proposing to stay to discuss the reason of the priestly rejection, or the governmental rejection, or the rejection. I simply face the fact as we look at this last appearing of Jesus. He was rejected.

Rejected, in the first place, by the priests of His time, and, consequently, by priestcraft. Here we pause for a moment to consider this question of priesthood in the light of Biblical revelation. In the divine economy as therein revealed, priesthood was really an accommodation to human weakness, and never a divine intention or provision, The history of the priesthood emerges in the most startling way. In the eighteenth chapter of Exodus we discover that when God emancipated a people from slavery and led them out with a high hand and outstretched arm into a large place, He brought them unto Himself, and the words that Moses was commissioned to speak to them were practically words of the New Testament, which came with greater meaning in the fulness of time: "I have chosen you to be unto Me, a kingdom of priests." In that declaration there is not the slightest suggestion of the creation of a caste of priests in the divine economy and purpose, but rather the creation of a nation in which every individual was to be a priest. I will make you unto Me a kingdom of priests, that was the divine original ideal for Israel. The people shrank from the high and awful function, were filled with fear in the presence of Jehovah, and naturally so: they were so filled with fear because of the consciousness of their sinfulness and inability. Then the principle obtained that runs through all the Divine dealings with men, accommodation to human weakness. Because the people were not able to rise to the high level of realizing their personal priesthood, a caste was created for a while to fulfil the function of priesthood on behalf of the people.

Through the centuries the story of priesthood runs on, and from beginning to end it is the story of failure, from beginning to end it is the story of corruption, of partial light eclipsed in darkness, of movement toward a higher forever falling to a lower, until the last act of priesthood was the inspiration that resulted in the murder of the Son of God. As I look at Him standing on Olivet's slope I see One Whom priesthood had cast out.

I also see here One Who had been cast out by government, by monarchy. Monarchy in Judea at that time was a poor and insignificant thing struggling to make its power great when, really, it was entirely paralyzed. Herod and those associated with him in the governing authority of the tetrarchies were under the mastery of Rome, that brutal bully in human history that for once subdued the world by brute force, and initiated the Pax Romana, which was but the pause of palsied inertia resulting from war. When Jesus was born, He was born into that peace, a peace not worth the name, and which happily was disturbed by war ere it had long continued.

But let me interpret this fact of government Biblically. What do we find concerning monarchy in the Bible? It was originally an accommodation to human weakness, just as was priesthood. I go back to this one nation that God chose, not in order that He might have a pet on whom to lavish His love, but to be the illustration of His Kingdom in the world for the uplifting of the nations. He said to them: "I have called you unto Myself." In the first glimpse of the history of the people, who were in many senses rude, almost barbaric, there shines a glory such as the world had never seen elsewhere. It is the glory of a theocracy, of a people governed by God, having no other king, and no other form of government. The history runs on for a little while, until there came a day in which this people said: "Give us a king like the nations." Then Samuel, brokenhearted by their failure, cried to God in complaint, and the answer of God, in the soul of Samuel, was this: "They have not rejected thee; they have rejected Me from being king. Therefore, go thou and anoint Saul, and give them what they ask." That was an accommodation to human weakness. Then followed the rapid exaltation and tragic fall of Saul, a king like the nations; the story of David, one gleam of light as to what kingship might be ending in black failure; then that of Solomon, the most disastrous failure in the Old Testament. Next, the kingdom was disrupted, and entered on a long period of conflict, until we see the people once again, a remnant weak and small, and Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah setting them in order, after which they were locked up to law, until Christ. Thus government by monarchy in the Bible is marked as being a necessary accommodation to human weakness, a story of ghastly failure and loss which resulted in the crucifixion of the Lord of Life and Glory.

And what of the people? Christ was rejected by the people also. The people entirely failed; they submitted to the dominion of false rulership, so that they themselves caught up the cries of the false rulers, and hissed between closed teeth, "Crucify! Crucify!" The people! May God deliver us from a democracy which is not first a theocracy.

What is the history of the people according to the Bible? Their failure antedated that of priest or king. Babel is the first chapter of the federation of the people in order that they may manage themselves, and make themselves a great name in the world. From that first chapter the movement runs on through all your Biblical literature until, thank God, the day is coming, which is not yet come, when the supreme anthem of earth's emancipation will take the form: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen! The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ."

I look, then, at this Man, with the little group gathered about Him on the slopes of Olivet. Priesthood has rejected Him, government has flung Him out, the people have given their vote, consenting to the self-same rejection.

Then I look at Him again, and what do I see? I see the one Priest of humanity, the great High Priest of the race, fulfilling the function of priesthood by the mystery of His Person as it could not possibly be fulfilled in any human being. Jesus could never have been the High Priest of humanity merely in His human nature. By oneness with God, and identification with man, He can be that which Job in his agony sighed for - and in that cry the sigh for priesthood is found, perhaps as nowhere else. Would that there were a daysman who might lay his hand on God and on me. That was the great cry of a soul for the mediation of one who is in himself in true fellowship with God, and in himself in perfect identification with humanity.

As I look I see that Jesus as the One human Priest, the power of Whose Priesthood was created, as the Writer of the Letter to the Hebrews said, by the power of an endless life, which is more than a human life, but which is human in its qualification also. By His oneness with God and identification with man He is the One Priest of humanity.

I look again, and I see Him as the one and only Governor and King of humanity, the One on Whose shoulder the Government is to rest, the one King Whose kingship is based on His eternal authority and His temporal associations - I did not say, "temporary." I used my word with care. I referred to associations that have to do with time. We have to do with time, and we shall always have to do with time. There is a sense in which we are not eternal nor can be. We have eternal life. We come into an atmosphere that keeps, and sustains, and enlarges; but we are not without beginning. To be eternal there must be no beginning. God, as eternal King, is One Whose authority is eternal, Who comes out of eternity, out of the necessity of things, out of the infinite wisdom that lies at the back of everything; the One Who initiates a law for a race, a nation, a man; which is not a law resulting from the manipulation of things as they seem, but which is a law resulting from the perfect knowledge of things as they are. This King's authority is based on that. His authority is based also on temporal association. He Who is the Logos, the eternal, has been made flesh, has brought the eternal into the compass of the observation of the temporal. His Kingship is based now and forevermore, first, on that eternal authority, and, second, on the fact that He tabernacled in the flesh, and walked the ways of men. God came into no closer sympathy with man by incarnation; but by incarnation God did reveal Himself in the exquisite tendernes and eternal strength of His sympathy. God, apart from incarnation, is an abstract idea, vast, terrific; but there is no warmth in it, there is no life in it, there is no inspiration in it. But when I go to a King, and I know His word is the word of eternal authority, and yet hear it stated in the words that my mother taught me and that I lisped when I was a baby, lo, I have found my King! I see Him, outside of the government of the world, but God's appointed Governor.

I see Him again as the ensign of the people, according to the prophetic word concerning Him: "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." It was but a little group about Him on Olivet, but think how many are gathered about Him today. Yes, let us think of that sometimes even today, when, it may be, we are tempted almost to imagine that the whole Christian ideal is being blotted out in blood. He is still the rejected One, but He is also the Crowned. He is even yet cast out of the councils of the nations. Ah! but He is considered and obeyed by a vast sacramental host, a sacramental host the extent of which we cannot measure by our Church statistics. His sacramental host includes the membership of churches, but runs far out beyond that membership, gathering into its ranks all souls pledged to name the Name and live according to His law. He gathers the people to Himself, for the realization of a democracy under the reign of the one King, a democracy great because it is a theocracy. So He stands on Olivet's slopes, rejected by the priests, the governors, the people. There He stands, the One Priest, the One King, the One to Whom the gathering of the peoples shall be.

Having thus looked at the principal matter, the Person, let us consider the statement, "He led them out." He took them towards Bethany. There were tender associations there. It was at Bethany that He found what was nearer to a home in His experience than any other place. There Lazarus lived, and Martha, and Mary, whom He loved. There He had often tarried; there He had spent those last tragic nights of the last terrific week. He led them that way. There was no temple there, no kingly palace. It was not the place where crowds ordinarily assembled. He led them out to Olivet, to some slope from which Bethany could be seen. He led them out from the temple, and the priests' ministrations. He led them out from the government, and its protection. He led them out from the people, and their permissions. They would have to run counter to all these things in the coming days, as He Himself had done. The priests would seek to destroy them and their testimony as they had sought to destroy Him. The governors would be against them, and would even declare that they were seditious; and ere very long a corrupt emperor-master of the world would amuse himself and his licentious profligate friends by watching them burn. All these things He knew, and that leading out signified that He appealed to none of these things to protect His disciples when He was gone. By that leading out, He suggested to His own disciples that they were not to look for help in their propaganda from priests or governors or people. He led them out into association with Himself, in testimony to all that which He had set up, and which He came to make possible in human history.

He led them out from the temple and the priests; He led them into the true temple through a rent veil, where they might exercise their priesthood as appearing in the presence of God on behalf of humanity, and then passing out to appear in the presence of humanity on behalf of God.

He led them out from the protection of human governments; but He led them into the protection of His own Government, underneath His own sway and kingship and power.

He led them out from the promises and the voting of the populace; but He led them into association with the new democracy, consisting of all souls yielded to the Kingship of God, through Whom, at last, the Kingdom shall be established.

That leading out was thus, indeed, a leading in. As the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says: He went outside the camp to suffer, to die; we must go after Him, bearing His reproach. But the writer of the letter to the Hebrews also says: The veil was rent, and He opened the way into the holiest of all; we may go in with boldness. The people around Him are people led out to be led in, led out from the false into the true, led out from failure to the place of assured victory, led out from all the forces that disintegrate and break up humanity and into association with all the forces that construct and build up humanity. So He led them out, and so He led them in.

From that day to this, He has been leading out and leading in. In proportion as we understand the occasion of that last appearing, we shall discover that the Church of God must never depend on priesthood, or governments, or democracies for her strength or protection. Every form and fashion of religion, every form and fashion of government, and all the hopes of the peoples, are centered in Him to Whom we have come, and in Whose Name we go with gladness, and singing, and hope, back to every form of religion, not to destroy it, but to fulfil the essential truth within it, and purge it of its dross; back to governments, not to proclaim anarchy, but to declare that every form of government must be finally related to the government through Whom it may realize its high ideals; back to the people, not to descend to the devilish barbarity of men who speak of them as canaille, but to love them, serve them, giving our own life blood to lift them into the great Kingdom of our God. He led them out, not for their sakes alone, but, in the infinite mystery of His marvelous work, for the sake of the very things from which He led them out.

His last act was to give a blessing. He lifted up His hands and blessed them. In those Hands were arguments, scars of battle, stigmata of pain, the insignia of royalty. It was the High Priestly act. It declared that sin was atoned for, that death was vanquished, that sorrow was commandeered, captured, in order that, finally, it may do duty for the Kingdom of God. Henceforth sorrow is the most powerful agent in the sanctification of human life, in the deliverance of nations from their perils, and of individuals from their foolishness. That High Priestly act of blessing was the act of One Who had grappled with the darkness of sin, and mastered it, Who "death by dying slew"; and He had apprehended sorrow and taken it into His own control, that henceforth it might be the minister of His will in a gracious and infinite mystery. In the uplifting of those hands was no act of forgiveness, no act of intercession. Those acts also lie within the priestly function; but that was the uplifting of hands in blessing, and blessing means bestowment. He uplifted His hands on men whom He had led out from all the forces that seemed great in the world, denying to these men the protection of these forces, but He lifted up His hands, and blessed them; and as He did so He gave them fulness of life, He gave them fellowship with God, He gave them perfect confidence for all the service that He was about to appoint to them.

Christ is thus seen to be the fulfilment, and, therefore, the center of priesthood, of government, of humanity.

When He leads men out from things that seem so necessary it is always to lead them into the possession of the real things. No man loses anything in his individual life; no society loses anything in the true passion that creates it a society; no nation loses anything of the underlying nobility of its national life by being obedient to Christ. He fulfils. He is always leading out from things effete to Himself. Things effete are not necessarily things evil. They have become effete, but they were not in the first case things evil. Things effete are things that have done their work. He taketh away the first that He may establish the second. Yes, but He established the first. Yea, verily, but when it has done its work He takes it away that He might establish the second. Sacrifice and offerings Thou wouldst not! But He appointed sacrifices and He appointed offerings! Yea! verily; but when they had fulfilled their work, He destroyed them. That is the perpetual method of Christ. If, when they have done their work, we cling to things that were necessary, perchance for us in our individual lives as Christians at the beginning, they will destroy the life they helped to make. Grave clothes are necessary for a dead man; but when he lives, loose him, and let him go! The law written on tables of stone was necessary in the first period of religious revelation; but when the Spirit of God through the infinite mystery of the atoning work of Jesus comes into the life and writes with the Finger of God on the table of the heart, then I do not want tables of stone. When I put myself in bondage to a table of stone written with the finger of God two to four millenniums ago, then I am in bondage to a thing effete.

Christ ever leads men out. One of the greatest troubles of the Christian Church has been that she so clings to things that were necessary yesterday, forgetting that Christ ever leads forward into something greater and grander. He led men out from things which in themselves had been necessary and had their place, a place made necessary by the bitter necessity of accommodation; but when these things had done their work He led the men out. The meaning of what He did that day had been revealed in His teaching previously. He said to a woman in Samaria: "… Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father." The day is coming when you will not need a temple, but wherever the soul is in need it may find access to God.

Christ's last attitude, the last appearing, the last manifestation of Himself in these days of appearing and disappearing, was in the attitude of blessing, the attitude, not of the Aaronic priesthood, but of Melchizedec. He is a Priest forever, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedec. We find Melchizedec in the first book of the Bible. Melchizedec met Abram when Abram was weary from a warfare that he had conducted in answer to a demand for righteousness. Melchizedec brought forth bread and wine for Abram, and ministered to his need. Melchizedec blessed Abram, and then passed out of sight, and Abram confronted the king of Sodom. The king offered him part of the booty. In possession of that spiritual blessing which had come to new consciousness in his soul by the ministry of Melchizedec, Abram declined to take a hoof of anything that the king offered. Then God spoke to his soul: "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Jesus lifts up His hands in blessing on the souls who dare to follow Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. He is the High Priest Who brings bread and wine to refresh and renew us in our weariness. He is the High Priest who brings the consciousness, who steadies our faith in God, who enables us to say to every bribe that may be offered us: Not a hoof of anything. We have all we need in God.