

The Messenger and the Message

By THOMAS A. DAVIS

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The hush of the congregation deepened as the young teacher accepted from the hand of the synagogue attendant the proffered Scripture roll, and began to find the passage on which he desired to comment. Strange stories had come to those villagers of this young man who had grown up in their midst; stories of water being turned into wine during a wedding feast at the village of Cana, and of miraculous healings, and of wonderful preaching. Vague rumors had reached them, too, that some in other parts of Galilee even thought that he might be the expected Messiah.

"How foolish," some of the silent people in the synagogue thought. "We have known this man from childhood, and while we must admit that he is different, yet—the Messiah? It could not be!"

Anyhow, after many weeks' absence from the village he was back again. They would learn for themselves about these rumors.

Now he had found his place, and began to read. As the words fell from his lips they assumed a power and beauty never before noticed by his attentive hearers. He was reading from the prophet Isaiah.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18, 19).

Scripture Fulfilled

With these words from the book of the prophet Isaiah, Jesus announced to the people of Nazareth His Messiahship. "This day," said He, "is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (verse 21).

It was from the sixty-first chapter of the gospel prophet that He read. This chapter, and the one following, foretold the glorious work that Christ would do for His people, and through His people. Reading these two chapters we observe that the dominant theme throughout this Messianic prophecy, like an ever-recurring melody weaving throughout a grand symphony, is the sublime strain of the gospel, a joyous "good news."

Christ, as the prophet forecast, and as He Himself witnessed and lived, was to "preach good tidings . . . to bind up the brokenhearted, to pro-

claim liberty . . . and the opening of the prison." His mission was to give the sorrowing ones "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Because of His ministry to humankind, the prophecy said, "everlasting joy shall be unto them." They would be "the seed which the Lord hath blessed," and through them, because of Him, God would cause "righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." They were to be "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord," "so shall thy God rejoice over thee." (Isa. 61:1, 3, 7, 9, 11; 62:3, 5.) Such were to be the joyous results of Christ's saving ministry for mankind.

But as Isaiah prophesied of the Saviour's gladsome message and loving ministry for others—a ministry that would bring hope and cheer to the world—so also he foretold in poignant and sad contrast the pain and sorrow and loneliness that would be Christ's own unhappy lot.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. . . . We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded . . . , he was bruised. . . . He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

Back to His Heart

By DALE A. STRAWN, M.D.

How sad was my life when I wandered in darkness;

The husks of the swine I did eat,
And there in the depths of this misery and woe,

I remembered the scars in His hands and His feet.

The friends I once had when I followed my Saviour

Were hoping and praying I knew,
At last I had come to myself and then cried,
"To my Father I'll go—all my wandering is through."

My Lord came to meet me when seen from afar off;

He took me then back to His heart,
He clothed me in robes of His finest design,
Now I'm happy again and shall never depart.

How matchless His love to you and to me,
Boundless and free as the heaven above.
Open wide now your heart, let Him enter in,
Then your life will be true and filled with His love.

yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter. . . . He hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:3-12).

What a strange and striking paradox is seen as we place Jesus' own experience on earth, as thus described, alongside His message and work for mankind. He was a Man of sorrows bringing joy, the rejected One bearing the message of God's acceptance to others, the wounded One binding up the wounds of humanity, the oppressed One championing the cause of the downtrodden, the slain Lamb offering life to all, the sinless Man bearing the sins and penalties of the whole world. He came to salve the heartbroken, but His own heart was crushed. His message was liberty for the bound, but cruel cords awaited His own hands. His was a ministry of comfort, but none comforted Him in His loneliness and pain. He carried beauty wherever He went, but ashes of sorrow were heaped upon His head. At His presence the oil of joy flowed clear and free, but in His heart was often the spirit of heaviness at the sins and blindness of His people.

Why do we find these strange paradoxes in the life and ministry of the Redeemer? The following words reveal the answer: "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. 'With His stripes we are healed.'"—*The Desire of Ages* (1940), p. 25.

Saw Ultimate Results

Looking into the future, and seeing the final fruits of all His labor and suffering, Christ—even while the world's woes and the enemy's temptations weighed Him down most—was able by faith to see the ultimate results of the toil of His soul. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11).

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God

which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9, 10). "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wis-

dom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:11-13).