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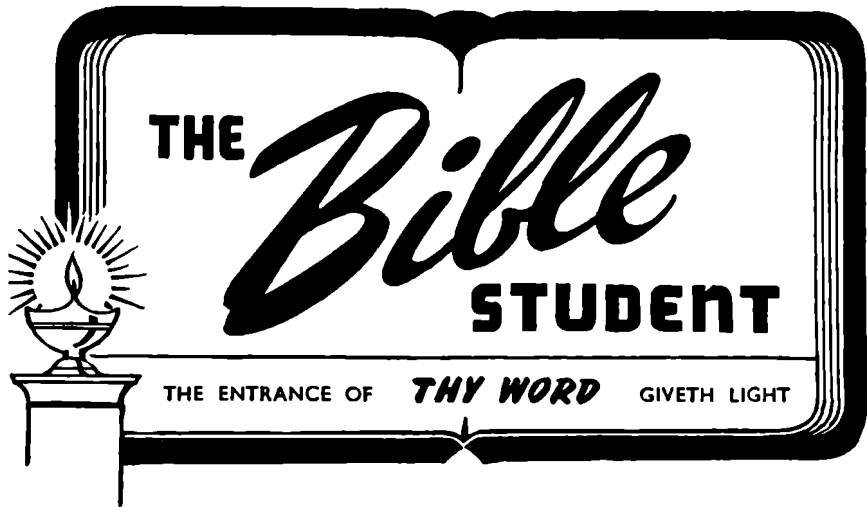
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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

king by reason of his sin. Ezekiel regarded Jehoiachin as the true king (cf. 'B.S.', Vol. xxiii, p. 150 and 17:13); the Judæan kingship had ended with his exile. This is the attitude of the Chronicler as well, as may be deduced from the way he dismisses Zedekiah's reign (2 Chr. 36:11 ff). Ezekiel may well have been influenced too by his foreknowledge of Zedekiah's broken oath (see notes on ch. 17.).

The acted fate of Zedekiah was followed by the acting out of the fate of the people (vs. 17-20); this section is largely a repetition of 4:9-12. But while there the stress was on the small quantities carefully measured, here it is on the dismay and anxiety with which his rations were eaten. We are not told how Ezekiel expressed these emotions, but he was doubtless able to communicate them vividly.

## 'BEHOLD MY SERVANT'!

By A. McD. REDWOOD

'I must work the works of Him that sent me while  
it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.'

Isaiah's prophecy contains the portrait of the Divine Servant, revealing something of His personal qualifications and the work He would accomplish. One of the distinctive passages is in ch. 42:1-4, 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.' The verses that follow define certain details of His work, more specially verse 7, 'To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.' In chapter 53 God calls Him 'my righteous servant', implying not merely that His character is righteous, but that the divine righteousness and its realization in human experience is to be the objective of His ministry.

Moreover, the Servant was to receive the special anointing of the Holy Spirit for His great work. The prophet stresses the fact in three different passages which are worth noting. The first in ch. 11:1 ff., 'The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the

spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' That this may have special reference to the Incarnation is probable, but it also looks forward to the second Advent and the Millennial reign. Chap. 42:1 already quoted, refers to His baptism (see Matt. 3:17; cf. Jn. 1:32); and then chap. 61:1 was fulfilled at the beginning of His public ministry (cf. Luke 4:17-21).

Centuries passed ere the Servant arrived—as the Babe in Bethlehem's manger. The four Gospels contain the inspired record of His unique life and ministry. In each the portrait of the Person is different yet perfectly consistent and in harmony with the others. John specially stresses the aspect of the divine Son, because this Christ must be seen as the one whom Isaiah foretold: 'A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel . . .' (ch. 7:14; 9:6, etc.). But he also is careful to record the special group of 'signs' which reveal the Master Workman at work in the very sphere in which the Devil had wrought such havoc, specially in human lives.

For our immediate purpose, however, it is sufficient to concentrate on the study of one rather distinctive phrase (recorded by John in ch. 9:4) uttered by the Divine Servant Himself: 'I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.' It is so simple and terse as to almost escape particular notice, but it lays bare the Servant's own profound sense of obligation and urgency to fulfill the purpose of His coming into the sphere of human life and sharing in its conditions. It is worth examining in some detail therefore.

1. The central note in the statement is found in the words, 'HIM THAT SENT ME'—they state the fact that He had been divinely COMMISSIONED: He was the '*Sent One*' in a totally unique sense, different from the numerous prophets God had raised up in the past history of His people. He had been commissioned to a unique work, a work that should have profound meaning for the whole of mankind from the creation to the end of time.

At the very commencement of His public ministry in the Synagogue in Nazareth He introduces Himself as the fulfilment of Isaiah's well-known prophecy: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives . . . today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears' (Lk. 4:18 ff.).

Thus quite simply and yet with authoritative assurance He announces His commission and ministry. He was not there to carry out His own will, on His own initiative: such a thought was impossible, for, 'though He were son, He learned obedience' (Heb. 5:8): or to use His own words 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing . . . for the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that He Himself doeth' (Jn. 5:19, 20; cf. 3:34). He was '*the sent One*' (the word itself occurs over forty times in the Gospel) and His supreme ambition, yea delight, was to live a life of complete dependence upon the Father, receiving from Him in turn all the spiritual reinforcements and supplies required for the execution of His mission. 'I seek not my own will, but the will of Him who *sent me*'. He could appeal also to the testimony of the works He performed: 'the very works that I do bear witness of me, that *the Father hath sent me*. And the Father which sent me He hath borne witness of me' (ch. 5:30, 36, 37, etc.).

2. The second feature in the statement is the divine Servant's profound consciousness of His true VOCATION: '*I must work the works of Him that sent me*'. His miracles of healing and mercy and the raising of the dead truly attested His divine character and power as the sent-One from God. But they had (we might say) an even deeper meaning and intention, namely, that His unique vocation was the cleansing of man's soul from the degradation of sin and restoring it to God. In other words, the death of SIN must be exchanged for the very LIFE of God Himself. A lost world must be recovered from the Devil's dominion and made the kingdom of God wherein dwelleth righteousness for ever more. His vocation involved the agony of the Cross in order to the Crown of glory which fadeth not away, shared by countless millions of adoring saints once sinners.

Even as a boy of twelve years, this sense of vocation is expressed in His reply to His parents' pained enquiry: 'wist ye not that I must be occupied in (lit. "immersed in") my Father's business?' (Luke 2:49). They were His first recorded words: That they were spoken in no spirit of youthful precocity is proved by the fact that later 'He went down with (his parents) . . . and *was subject unto them*.' Also verse 52 makes clear that 'Jesus advanced in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man'. His own conception of His vocation grew steadily as He thus

'advanced', but all the while, be it said, it was *His* in a manner and measure transcending His perfectly normal development from childhood to manhood. We cannot venture beyond the veil that hides Him from our inquisitiveness during those silent years of youth. But He *knew* He had a vocation from the Father, as already indicated, His 'I must' lays down 'the law of devotion to His Father by which He was to walk even to the cross' (Farrar): and in His reply to His parents' enquiry (Luke 2:48), He does not accept the phrase employed by Mary '*thy* father' (alluding to Joseph), but turns it to *ho patēr mou*, 'the Father of me'—it was to '*His* house' He had resorted when His parents missed Him. Similarly in John 20:17, 'I ascend unto the Father of me and the Father of you', for God is His Father in a different way to that which constitutes Him our Father. But all through life the dignity of being the Son of God was held in perfect equipoise with His being the divine Servant: 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' As the shadow of the cross drew nearer He could reiterate 'I am in the midst of you as he that *serveth*' (Luke 22: 27).

But what of the 'works' which characterized His vocation? The phrase 'the works of God' is used frequently throughout this Gospel: in fact the miracle which gave rise to the statement we are studying provides an illustration of the reason for the Servant coming into the world: the opening of the blind eyes was a miracle not so much on the man as *in* him—alike on his physical body (vs. 6 and 7), and in his spiritual healing (vs. 29-39), as evidenced in the healed man *worshipping!* The doing of these works were as food to His own soul for they were in obedience to the will of His Father (ch. 4:34). They bore witness to His divine commission (Jn. 5:36; 10:38); and as the cross and its agony drew nearer He was able to say to the Father, 'I have glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do' (Jn. 17:4 also vs. 6, 7, 14-23 in the same context).

3. '*Whilst it is day*': This day of the MANIFESTATION of the grace, mercy and love of God through the work of the divine Servant. His ministry was that of bringing into the light what had hitherto been hidden, although there had always been the glimmerings in the great ministry of the prophets, lighting up the passing centuries with hope and expectation of the coming

Saviour. Now His very presence constituted it 'DAY'; as John puts it, 'In Him was life and the life was the light of men'. Jesus Himself meets His Jewish opponents with the declaration: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see *my day*, and he saw it and was glad.' Even before His birth Zacharias sang, 'the Dayspring from on high hath visited us to shine upon them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; to guide their feet into the way of peace' (Luke 1:78, 79. Cf. 2: 32).

Christ's ministry was to turn man's darkness into day, as expressed in His own words, 'He that followeth me shall in no wise walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life' (Jn. 8:12). In the very first of the miracle-signs characteristic of this Gospel the divine Servant '*manifested His glory*', and His disciples believed on Him (Jn. 2:11); and, to refer again to the miracle of ch. 9, the real purpose behind it was that 'the works of God should be made manifest'. (cf. verse 3).

St John is particularly fond of that verb *phaneroō*, 'to manifest'; to bring into the light, using it no less than eighteen times in his writings—which is more than in any other single N.T. book. 'The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness and declare unto you the life. . . .' (1 Jn. 3: 5, 8, etc.). In that matchless high-priestly prayer of the Saviour-Servant (Jn. 17) He dwells somewhat on the outcome of His ministry: 'I have manifested THY name unto the men whom thou hast given me'; with which may be compared the statements in vs. 6, 8, 14, 22, etc. And in manifesting the Name He revealed all the plenitude of God's love behind that name, even the very heart of God. We can sing, therefore, with the Psalmist, 'This is the DAY the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.' (Ps. 110:24; see the context also).

4. The final clause is equally full of meaning: '*The night cometh when no man can work.*' It implies both CONCLUSION and CONSUMMATION; the day of grace and the Gospel of salvation will end; the 'night' of judgment will follow upon a Christ-rejecting world. As to the servants of the Lord, '*no man can work.*' The forces of evil will be in full control. Whatever deeper implication may lie in the statement, it is applicable to the period the Church has been caught away to the presence of her Saviour Lord: 'I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go . . . I come again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also' (Jn. 14:13, 14).

Great events will follow, involving the whole creation, but there is one at least which refers to believers in general: 'We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done, whether it be good or bad' (1 Cor. 3:10-15, R.V. Read the whole passage carefully). Hence for us all, but in a sense for those who are His servants in particular perhaps, the apostle's exhortation is challenging: 'Ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober . . . putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet the hope of salvation' (1 Thess. 5: 4-8). What directly concerns us at the moment is the fact that *it is still DAY*. Though the divine Servant, our Master, has been in the glory nigh two thousand years, His Message is still being heralded forth throughout the world. It is just in this fact that the text has an immediate and compelling.

#### Personal Challenge

which will be found in the Revised Version rendering of the text we are studying (for which there is strong MS authority)—note the reading—

V. '*WE MUST WORK the works of Him that sent me*': Here is *our continuation* of what He inaugurated, namely the spread of the Gospel, and not merely continuation but most vitally also CO-OPERATION, as Mark's record fully bears out: 'And they (i.e., the disciples) went forth, and preached everywhere, the LORD working *with them*, and confirming the word by the signs that followed' (Mark 16:20). Here is work for every true servant of God, in fact for every believer who owns Christ's sway in daily life and testimony.

In our Lord's high-priestly prayer already alluded to He says: 'As thou didst send me into the world, *even so sent I them* into the world' (Jn. 17:17). The aorist tense of the verb views the divine intention as already accomplished, though in actual experience it could not be until Christ was glorified. This reference to His own commission is placed first as being the basis and example of their subsequent mission who would continue what He had commenced. He repeats His words after His Resurrection with even fuller emphasis: 'As the Father hath sent



me, *even so send I you*' (Jn. 20:19-23). The subsequent history of the church as seen in the Acts is illustrative of what the risen and glorified Lord expects of us still in this day and generation (cf. Acts 1:1-8 in particular). The Lord's own words still ring out world-wide in the heart of His true disciples: 'ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth'.

Moreover our equipment is the same 'anointing' of the Holy Spirit as was His: 'He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit' (Jn. 20:22) which was but a prelude to the more comprehensive coming of the Spirit that could only take place after His Ascension (Acts 2). In this fact lies the guarantee of all effective service, and without it no service will stand the test at the judgment-seat of Christ: 'wherefore', says the apostle, 'we make it our aim (we are "ambitious") to be well-pleasing to him for we must all be made manifest' there (2 Cor. 5:10).

We close with the challenging words of the apostle: 'Ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober . . . putting on the breastplate of faith and love: and for a helmet the hope of salvation' (1 Thess. 5:4-8).

'I charge you in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus . . . *Preach the word*; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching: For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching, but will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts . . .' (2 Timothy 4:1-4); '*the Night cometh when no man can work*'!