

The Angel Message Tracts

Chapter 1

WHAT DID JESUS PREACH?

BY ELBERT A. SMITH



*And I saw another angel fly in the midst
of heaven, having the everlasting gospel
to preach unto them that dwell on the
earth.---Revelation 14 : 6* : : : :



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The Angel Message Song

I have found the glorious gospel that was taught in former
years,

With its gifts and blessings all so full and free;
And my soul is thrilled with gladness, and banished are my
fears,

Since the precious Angel Message came to me.

Then praise the Lord, oh, my soul!

Abundant mercy, oh, how free!

In joyful song thy Spirit doth accord,

Since the precious Angel Message came to me.

I wandered long in darkness, yet sought the narrow way,
And my life was like the surging of the sea;
But now I am rejoicing in this the latter day,
Since the precious Angel Message came to me.

My once blind eyes are open, my sins are washed away,
And the kingdom I can very plainly see;
No more do fears and doubtings my trusting soul dismay,
Since the precious Angel Message came to me.

Now for celestial glory, in the presence of the Lord,
I will work and watch and humbly bow the knee;
No longer faith, but knowledge, in true and sweet accord,
With the precious Angel Message brought to me.

JAMES L. EDWARDS.

What Did Jesus Preach?

CHAPTER 1

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 broken-hearted, 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.

A SABBATH DAY IN NAZARETH

Our text takes us back to Nazareth. It is the Sabbath Day. The men and women of Nazareth are wending their way toward the synagogue. Thither also goes Jesus of Nazareth, known to us as the Son of God, known to the Nazarenes only as the son of Joseph the carpenter, and Mary.

His is a familiar form on the streets of Nazareth, for this is his home town, the city where he spent his boyhood days. His face is familiar in the synagogue also, for the record tells us that it was his custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day. He is a regular churchgoer.

He enters the synagogue. It is much like other Jewish synagogues. The interior is a large, plain, rectangular room. The men sit at one side; the women, heavily veiled, sit at the other side, behind screens.

At one end of the room stands the ark or chest containing the books of the law, and by its side a

raised platform with a desk on which the speaker may rest the books or scrolls of the law and the prophets.

JESUS IN THE PULPIT

On this occasion the ruler of the synagogue invites Jesus to read for the people. He comes forward, receives the book, turns to Isaiah, and reads the passage contained in our text.

Having read standing, as the custom is, he seats himself to deliver the discourse, again observing the custom.

His first words are surcharged with meaning: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Thus he announces his Messiahship, explains his mission, outlines his program.

He says in substance:

I am he of whom the prophet spoke when he said, 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 broken-hearted, 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.

At first the people listen with astonishment, mingled with pleasure; but as the full meaning of his announcement dawns upon them, and particularly as he proceeds to rebuke them for their faults, a change comes over them. They are filled with wrath. Soon men are fighting in the aisles. They rise up and tear him from the synagogue and thrust him from the town, attempting to fling him down the steep hillside to his death. But his time has not come, and he passes safely through their midst and is gone.

NEVER TO RETURN

Never again, so far as the record shows, did he return to Nazareth. Never again, so far as we know, was his voice heard in that old synagogue. He took up his residence in Capernaum.

It is a dangerous thing to reject the message of Jesus, even when it comes in rebuke. Beware lest you make that mistake now.

WHAT DID JESUS PREACH?

Anointed, as he said, by his Father, and ordained from before the foundation of the world for that very work, and filled with the Spirit that he declared rested upon him that day in the old synagogue, Jesus moved out in his great mission: preaching the gospel.

What did he preach? The deeds and declarations of his apostles and ministers ordained and sent out by him are equally binding, so long as they did his will and possessed his Spirit. But for the time being let us confine ourselves to the question: What did *Jesus* preach?

What are the great fundamental principles of that gospel that is for ever dignified, consecrated, and made binding upon men because Jesus of Nazareth preached it?

“HAVE FAITH IN GOD”

In the open air, under a fig tree, on the road between Bethany and Jerusalem, this man who in the old synagogue at Nazareth announced his mission, delivered one of his wonderful gospel sermons.

He prefaced it with this single, short, but virile

and heart-gripping sentence: "Have *faith* in God."
(Mark 11: 22.)

Later in his ministry, in fact just shortly before his death, he delivered himself of another short, concise, yet equally dynamic and significant statement: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."
(John 14:1.)

REPENTANCE

After John the Baptist had done his work of preparing the way of the Lord, he began to "decrease," while Jesus began to "increase," as John had predicted.

The star of John began to decline. The star of Jesus topped the horizon, and its splendid rays began to illuminate the world. So we read:

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; *repent* ye, and believe the gospel.—Mark 1: 14, 15.

BAPTISM OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT

Nicodemus, wealthy, proud, of high station, a ruler, apparently fearing public confession, came to Jesus by night to learn of him.

Brushing aside all preliminaries, all polite niceties of approach, Jesus declared with solemn directness: "Except a man be *born again*, he can not see the kingdom of God." (John 3: 3.)

In answer to a further question from Nicodemus, he said: "Except a man be born of *water* and of the *Spirit*, he can not enter into the kingdom of God."
(John 3: 5.)

In order to see and enter into the kingdom whose immediate presence he had announced, and to enter which faith and repentance were required, it was necessary also to be born again, to be born of the water and of the Spirit,—to be *baptized in water* and by the *Spirit*.

A ruler once came to Jesus by night,
To ask him the way of salvation and light;
The Master made answer in words true and plain,
Ye must be *born again*.

Ye children of men attend to the word
So solemnly uttered by Jesus, the Lord,
And let not this message to you be in vain,
Ye *must* be born again.

Baptism is one doctrine that Jesus chose to emphasize in the most commanding manner conceivable by preaching it after his resurrection. In his final commission to his apostles he said:

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is *baptized* shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.—Mark 16: 15, 16.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—Matthew 28: 19, 20.

Thus at the close of his ministry on earth as well as at the very beginning of his public life he taught this great principle of baptism. We caught our first full glimpse of him as a man when he walked down the banks of Jordan and was baptized by John.

He thus by personal example gave an irrefutable

argument for baptism. God concurred, and coming up out of the water from his immersion, Jesus received the baptism of the Spirit.

Born "of the water and of the Spirit," he began his ministry. Closing it, he sent his disciples out to baptize all nations.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

It was in this same parting commission (and admonition) that he taught the principle of the laying on of hands. For at that time he said: "They shall *lay hands on the sick*, and they shall recover." (Mark 16: 18.)

This principle he had previously taught by example: "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them." (Luke 4: 40.)

These blessings came not to the faithless but to those who believed on him, and were not to gratify idle and curious sign seekers.

After Paul had been stricken blind on the road to Damascus by the miracle that led up to his conversion, Ananias came to him with healing and help:

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and *putting his hands on him*, said, Brother Saul, the Lord even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, *hath sent me*, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.—Acts 9: 17.

Yes, Jesus, the Lord of glory, sent Ananias *to lay hands on Paul* that he might be healed and that he might receive the Holy Ghost.

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

From the earliest dawn of time the question that perplexed Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?" has been in the hearts and on the lips of men.

As Jesus, with tears standing in his eyes, approached the tomb where his friend Lazarus lay dead, he turned to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, and answered this question of the ages: "I am the *resurrection*, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John 11: 25.)

At another time he said:

The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. . . . The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.—John 5: 25-29.

THE JUDGMENT

Reproaching the cities that had rejected him, in the most impressive manner Jesus warned them of an impending day of judgment:

Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the *day of judgment*, than for you.—Matthew 11: 21, 22.

ABIDING IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

These, then, were the great fundamental principles of the gospel that Jesus preached. They are just as vital now as then.

If defense be necessary for teaching doctrine in

this age, in which doctrinal preaching is heavily discounted in certain circles, our defense is prepared for us in God's word:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the *doctrine* of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the *doctrine* of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.—2 John 9.

Take heed unto thyself, and unto the *doctrine*; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.—1 Timothy 4: 16.

But speak thou the things which become *sound doctrine*.—Titus 2: 1.

THE PAULINE CREED

Jesus said of Paul: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts 9: 15.)

We have observed that Jesus preached six fundamental doctrinal principles in his presentation of the gospel. The creed makers strangely enough have passed some of them by. But Paul gathers them all up in a single paragraph, in what we might term the "Pauline Confession of Faith."

Paul was especially chosen to bear the gospel of Jesus to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. We may not be kings, but one thing is certain, we are either Gentiles or Israelites, as the terms were then used.

Paul has a message for us. Hear him:

Therefore leaving the *principles* of the *doctrine of Christ*, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of *repentance* from dead works, and of *faith* toward God, of the doctrine of *baptisms*, and of *laying on of hands*, and of *resurrection* of the dead, and of *eternal judgment*.—Hebrews 6: 1, 2.

Paul is writing to those who have already believed, repented, and been baptized. He exhorts them to go

on, not laying again that sure foundation, leaving (a better version says, "not leaving") those truths. In doing so he names the principles of the doctrine (gospel) of Christ.

He names the very six principles that we have found Jesus preaching: Faith, repentance, baptism, laying on of hands, the resurrection, and eternal judgment.

OUR EPITOME OF FAITH

In our "epitome of faith" you will find this statement:

We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all men may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

We believe that these ordinances are:

(1). Faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ. (2). Repentance. (3). Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. (4). Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. (5). We believe in the resurrection of the body, that the dead in Christ will rise first, and the rest of the dead will not live again until the thousand years are expired. (6). We believe in the doctrine of eternal judgment, which provides that men shall be judged, rewarded, or punished, according to the degree of good, or evil, they shall have done.

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE TO THIS AGE

This same gospel that Jesus preached and that Paul summed up in his statement of principles again has been discovered to our attention by angelic administration under God's direction.

We affirm its perfection and divine potency to save all men who accept it.

It is being preached again in all the world, for a

witness ere the end comes. It is the angel's message to this age.

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

By what authority did Jesus preach this gospel? He said: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." (John 7: 16.)

Who sent him? He answers:

The Spirit of the *Lord* is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.—Luke 4: 18.

The Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say.—John 12: 49.

That was his authority. Under it he operated. Take that in connection with Paul's statement (Hebrews 5: 4-6) that Jesus took not his priesthood upon himself, and the statement of the Master to his apostles, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15: 16), and we have an unbreakable chain of argument in favor of the fact that men must be chosen and ordained and receive authority ere they represent God as preachers.

How is such authority to be had to-day? It was lost during the great apostasy of the Dark Ages; but again by direction of God and by angelic administration it has been restored to earth.

THE SPIRIT UNDER WHICH JESUS WORKED

In the prosecution of his mission, as outlined that day in Nazareth, Jesus moved out, actuated by the spirit of love.

Those who met him personally felt love in his serene presence. They saw it in his luminous eyes, in his benign countenance, in his gentle ministrations.

We feel it to-day, too, but mostly we must measure his love by his sacrifice, his humiliation, his suffering:

From glory down to Calvary!
'Tis marvelous! How can it be?

We sense his mental agony in Gethsemane. We see him dragged like a thief from the garden by night and taken before the high priest and his council. They spit in his face and slap him on the cheek.

Having been condemned by the council, he is taken before Pilate to be tried. He does not summon witnesses in self-defense, for he knows the court will not bring in the verdict. The mob will render the verdict.

He hears the brutal howlings of the mob, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate says, "I find no fault in him"; but the mob overrules him and Jesus is condemned to die.

The church, the mob, and the civil authorities having insulted and maltreated him, he is given up to the soldiers, that the military authorities may have their turn.

They clothe him with a scarlet robe and put a crown of thorns on his head. They mock him, to make a carnival of tomfoolery of the event; thinking to make him appear a clown.

At last he is dragged away to be crucified. Thrown upon the cross, great spikes are driven through his hands and feet, through flesh and between bones. The cross is erected, dropping with a jolt into the hole dug to receive it.

The body of Jesus hangs suspended "on four great

throbbing wounds," to endure the awful agony of the most terrible death ever devised by men or devils.

WHY DID HE DO IT?

Why did he do it? He did it for you and for me. By that which he suffered we measure his devotion to and love for us.

By thus identifying himself with us in suffering and humiliation he wins our love and confidence, as he could not have done had he passed softly through this life and been borne away to paradise on flowery beds of ease. By his suffering and his teaching and his example we are reconciled to God,—a God who always loved us and sent his Son to win us back to life and love.

THE EXTENT OF HIS MISSION

Jesus himself did not travel over a very extensive area during his work in Palestine. But his mission was not circumscribed by the extent of his own travels.

He sent his apostles out with this commission: "Go ye into *all* the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Or as Matthew has it:

Go ye therefore, and teach *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

His mission was to all the world. And it was to continue to the very end, even despite the great apostasy that ensued during the Dark Ages. For we read:

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in *all* the world for a witness unto *all nations*; and then shall the *end* come.—Matthew 24: 14.

TO THE REGIONS OF THE DAMNED

Nor was his mission by any means confined to this world. In Ephesians we are told:

Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?—Ephesians 4: 9.

Again it is written:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.—1 Peter 3: 18-20.

A NOTABLE MEETING

That must have been a notable meeting. There is the region of the lost, the dark abode of the damned, presided over by Satan, formerly Lucifer, the bright "son of the morning," associated with angels and God himself, but for his rebellion cast headlong from heaven and now fallen to this low estate.

His visage is dark with every infamy. His spirit is embittered by defeated ambition, with that bitterness that comes to every apostate, the very quintessence of wormwood and gall; a thousand times intensified in the case of one who has fallen from *such* a height to *such* a depth.

Into this dark region, into this menacing pres-

ence, comes Jesus, the Son of God, clothed with light as with a garment, wearing the invincible panoply of righteousness, holding in his hand "all authority in heaven and on earth," having "the keys of hell and of death," with the gospel of salvation to preach to the damned, fulfilling his mission, to "proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKETH AWAY SIN

Briefly we have examined the work of Jesus as a preacher of the gospel, reviewing his authority, the principles of his gospel, the spirit of his work, its object, and the extent of his mission. These subjects and others will be treated in detail in succeeding chapters.

With all solemnity, by direction of the Holy Spirit, in the language of John, we say, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Listen to his gospel and obey it. And again, this time in the language of Paul, his "chosen vessel," we say unto you:

"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

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Note.—The next chapter will be devoted to the important subject, "Faith in God." This is a scientific age. Is faith in accord with science? What place has faith in the gospel plan? These questions will be answered.