

# 'Discourse on the Bread of Life Pt. 2' Ch. 6:41-71

by Charles Alexander

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the central fact of faith and the key to understanding God's love and nature.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 54:13, Matthew 26:63, John 6:41-70

**Topics:** "Incarnation Of Christ", "Divine Nature"

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## Description

Charles Alexander preaches about the profound doctrine of the incarnation, emphasizing the essential belief in God becoming man, which is the cardinal point of all theology. He highlights how the rejection of Christ's incarnate deity by the Jews led to their downfall and the ultimate revelation of Christ as the incarnate God during His trial before Caiaphas. The sermon delves into the significance of Christ's earthly testimony, the refusal to acknowledge Him as the central figure of creation, and the unbelief of the Jews and its parallels in modern times. It concludes with the triumph of faith over appearances and the importance of recognizing and believing in Christ's divine nature for true faith and salvation.

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## Transcript

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus. the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? (John 6:41 42)

The cardinal point of all theology, says Doctor Hengstenberg, is the incarnation God becoming man. The purely human view of Christ taken by the Jews of Capernaum (as quoted above) is instantly challenged by the Lord, who presses home with the utmost vigor and deliberation the doctrine of His own incarnate deity. That He does this in the face of the scandal which the doctrine created not only amongst the Capernaum Jews but amongst many others who hitherto numbered themselves among His disciples shows that there can be no compromise on the doctrine of the incarnation. Without it, there is no atonement and there can be no faith. That God became man is the supreme fact of creation and embodies the entire purpose and meaning of creation.

It was upon this rock of Christ's incarnate deity that the nation of Israel was doomed to fall and be broken. When the Lord stood in the judgment before the high priest Caiaphas, He maintained silence against all that the false witnesses declared against him; He waited with infinite patience that moment when His true

identity as the incarnate God would be demanded, as demanded it was in the solemn adjuration of Caiaphas, the legal representative and head of the nation: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

There came the sublime and awful answer: "Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"

(Matthew 26:63 64).

That was the supreme moment of Christ's earthly testimony, the climax of the revelation of Himself; it was for this He was condemned, rejected, and crucified according to the Scriptures. Incorporated in the Lord's sublime confession was the great sentence from the prophecy of Daniel 7:13 14, where at the central point of all creation the incarnate God is seen advancing to His throne by right of His own worthiness. The quotation from Daniel endorses every claim Christ ever made for Himself in respect of His essential Godhead:

I saw in the night visions, and,  
behold, one like the Son of man  
came with the clouds of heaven, and  
came to the Ancient of days, and  
they brought him near before him.  
And there was given him dominion,  
and glory, and a kingdom, that all  
people, nations, and languages should  
serve him: his dominion is an ever  
lasting dominion, which shall not  
pass away, and his kingdom that which  
shall not be destroyed.

The refusal to acknowledge Christ as the absolute central personality of all creation, the reason for all things, is the fundamental error.

The Lord's discourse on the bread of life is not sermonical in the sense that it is a formal and connected statement, for it is largely in the form of dialogue. Each succeeding section is provoked by unbelieving protest on the part of the hearers. But, throughout, the Lord maintains a most elevated position, as befits one from whose mouth the prophets of old time spoke and who now as the Word of God incarnate presents Himself as the totality of wisdom, the source of life, and the unveiling of the Godhead in person.

He does not condescend to the unbelief of the Jews. His discourse is on such a level that the carnal minds even of many who had hitherto attached themselves to Him were offended; and, through the prejudices

under which they labored, many went back and walked no more with Him.

## THE JEWISH NATION ON TRIAL

Those who have willingly surrendered themselves to unbelief and whose minds are warped by pride are incapable of receiving the Word of life. Repentance (which means the return of the soul to its true center in God) alone prepares the soul for seeing and hearing. Though the audience was only the synagogue congregation of the Galilean township of Capernaum, it was the Jewish nation which was in fact on trial as the Lord opened to them the doctrine of His own incarnation.

The murmuring of the Jews at Capernaum was the murmuring of the nation in its long history of restless rebellion against God from the time of Moses onward; and John makes this clear in his inspired use of the phrase, "the Jews murmured" the first time in this chapter that these Galileans are described as "the Jews." Their murmuring occurred at the critical point when with increasing clearness and deliberation the Lord declared that He had "come down from heaven" a distinct assertion of absolute deity.

Tolerant of the claim that here was a prophet and messenger from God who they even hoped might embody their false messianic hope of a Jewish kingdom on earth ruling over all the world, these Capernaum Jews were instantly roused in all their bitter national prejudice by the explicit claim of Christ, not only to be superior to Moses and all the prophets, but to be very God come down from heaven. This was the rock upon which not only themselves but their entire nation was destined to fall and be broken, even as it had been foretold: "And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Luke 20: 17 18).

See also 1 Peter 2:7 8; Isaiah 8:14 15; Isaiah 28:16; Psalm 118:22 21.

Attuned to the language of the Old Testament, these people well knew that only God "came down from heaven" in the sense that this Jesus of Nazareth spoke of Himself. They were being invited to believe that the one whom they had known from childhood, who had wrought amongst them as a common tradesman, "whose father and mother" they thought they knew, was none other than God come down from heaven.

To the Jewish nation, cradled in the doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the incarnation of God was incredible. The scandal and the offense the doctrine caused remain to this day except where the election of grace (Romans 11:5) finds its repentant and believing remnant. It could be objected that these people were taken at an unfair disadvantage and that the Lord's continued pressure upon them of His own incarnate deity throughout this dialogue at Capernaum made inevitable that final break, when not only these Jews were inveterately scandalized but many who had hitherto been His disciples went back and walked no more with Him (John 6:56).

This relentless assertion by Christ of His own incarnate deity in the face of the inevitable consequences upon His hearers can be explained only by the fact that the incarnation is the summit of all revelation and must be held and preached and taught and believed as the central fact of faith, without which all else falls to the ground.

It would be false, however, to suppose that the unbelief of the Capernaum Jews was tolerable because of the prejudice in which they were cradled. These gainsayers were in no ordinary position of privilege; and their unbelief, so far from being excusable, sprang only from their own evil hearts. All the evidences were

there to satisfy the humble enquiring mind that here stood One who had come down from heaven. Had they not witnessed the feeding of five thousand with five barley loaves? Had they not themselves eaten of the loaves and been filled? Had they not marvelled at how He had crossed the Sea of Galilee without a vessel? Had they not been prepared to crown Him king of Israel on the spot? Did they not possess in the reading of the Scriptures that priceless hope, which they only of all that dwelt upon the earth enjoyed? Here was the fulfillment of the promise of salvation in the "seed of the woman," whose coming had been attested by the witness of John the Baptist and by miracles of indisputable power and divinity at yonder village of Cana and elsewhere in that same vicinity. If such evidences were insufficient to attest so solemn a claim as now He made of Himself, it must be the fault, not of the evidence, but of the state of their own hearts who sought after the Savior only insofar as they ate of the loaves and were filled. A king who would fill their bellies with unwrought for bread was to their liking. One who destroyed their delusions by offering to them only spiritual meat and drink was a king for whom they had no use. Worse, when it became clear that He was speaking of Himself as the bread of life, their carnal nature revolted. When He pressed upon them that He had come down from heaven's eternal throne and that only by "eating" of Him as that bread of life could they be eternally saved, this was an outrage.

#### FAITH'S TRIUMPH OVER APPEARANCES

The woman of Samaria in John 4 believed Him who offered her "living water"; and had they been aware of their sinfulness, as she was made aware of hers, they would have left their carnal appetite behind in the wilderness as she left her water pot. They would have acclaimed to all that here was their God, as she in her own inspired words to the men of Samaria, "Is not this the Christ?"

Unbelief does not spring from the difficulties of faith, but from hardness of heart. Yet the unbelief of the Jews cannot be excused because of any natural prejudice they bore against so profound a doctrine as the incarnation. The fact that the Lord was not at any pains to relieve that prejudice by a milder or a more indirect approach to the subject shows that He had now arrived at the critical point of His controversy with the Jewish nation.

However unreasonable it may have seemed that he should excite the national prejudice against Himself by so daring and uncompromising a declaration of His own deity, it must be remembered that that prejudice arose from their sinful and carnal minds and was entirely without excuse. There were examples not a few of how those with sincere and humble hearts quickly embraced by the faith the disclosure of His own divinity (though clothed with flesh and blood). How readily Nathaniel (John 1:49) acclaimed Him: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." How wonderfully the poor woman of Samaria discerned her God in the one Who offered her living water, so that she should never thirst again! Nicodemus was not accommodated in his pharisaic prejudice by any modified presentation of Christ in His true divinity: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). These were the hard sayings of Christ to this educated and influential man. The record proves that neither was Nicodemus inhibited from faith by this otherwise incredible claim of Christ to be the Creator incarnate. It also proves that this doctrine is essential to faith, nor can there be any true faith without it.

So it must ever be the central truth of all truth that God should "come down from heaven" and give His life for the life of the world. This was the entire point of Christ's controversy with unbelief, and it must on no account be modified in preaching or relegated to some final phase of theological instruction. It must ever be the point at which preaching begins, for the incarnation remains the key to all mysteries and the ground

of all true faith. Without it, creation is meaningless and all religion is vain. Herein lies the failure of much of modern evangelism in that it does not begin with Christ's incarnate deity, but with the sinner and his need. This is a great mistake. Without the presentation of Christ in all His glory, He can never be presented in all His atoning sufficiency and eternal righteousness.

#### WHEN GOD MADE MAN

When God made man in His own likeness, He did so with a view to becoming man Himself, that man as the true image of God might be united to Him in mystic and eternal communion and so the riches of the glory of the Divine Being be fully displayed and made intelligible to all creation according to the good pleasure of God. Without the incarnation, there can be no atonement and no answer to the problem of evil. The hope of creation centers around Bethlehem's manger bed and the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. The inspired Apostle John wonderfully describes this miracle of the divine manifestation:

That which was from the beginning,  
which we have heard, which we have  
seen with our eyes, which we have  
looked upon, and our hands have  
handled, of the Word of life: (For  
that life was manifested, and we  
have seen it and bear witness, and  
shew unto that eternal life, which  
was with the Father and was  
manifested unto us) (1 John 1: 1 2).

God comes down from heaven and immaculately takes of the substance of man in the womb of the virgin. Human agency in the conception is excluded (as it must inevitably be); for here is new creation. God becoming man. The part of the virgin was passive only. That which was conceived in her was by the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35).

The prophetic ground of the incarnation was anticipated by David in Psalm 139:15 16,

My substance was not hid from thee,  
when I was made in secret, and  
curiously wrought in the lowest  
parts of the earth. Thine eyes  
did see my substance, yet being  
unperfect; and in thy book all my

members were written, which in  
continuance were fashioned, when  
as yet there was none of them.

That which was mysteriously wrought "in the lowest parts of the earth" that is, which was implanted and grew in the womb of the virgin; that which was brought forth into the world in the stable of the inn at Bethlehem and wrapped in swaddling clothes; that which was nourished on a maiden's bosom, which was sheltered and protected in helpless infancy and childhood by a dedicated human pair, was God manifest in the flesh.

The dark shadow of the cross lay across that strange cradle. He was born that he might die, that in dying He might destroy death and the grave and bring life and immortality to light; that from His tomb might spring a new creation, never again to fall, and from which all possibility of evil should be perpetually excluded. The divine purpose in creation is fully realized in Him who was God, who became man, and whose glorified human nature, in which He conquered death, will remain eternally united to His divine nature as He reigns without end over all creation, and we in Him.

It is against this revelation of the eternal God that evil contends with all its might. He who redeems the world must be the world's Creator. No one except the fountain of life Himself, and therefore the eternal God incarnate, could in virtue of His own life laid down stand in the midst of history and declare, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and again, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me"

(John 6:57).

The incarnation reveals God as one God in a trinity of Persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He who lay in human life in the darkness of the womb and drew his first breath on Man's bosom did not abandon His Godhead when He became man. He remained the same divine person united in one essence with the Father through the Spirit, one God incomprehensible and eternal, holding in the frailty of an infant's breath the destiny of all creation. The incarnation was possible only because the one essence of Godhead is mysteriously manifest in three Persons. The divine essence being one and not three, there can be no division of its unity; yet because that one essence is the essence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Father could send the Son for our redemption, and the Spirit of God (the Spirit of the Father and the Son, of both yet neither the one nor the other and therefore a third Person) could take of the substance of the woman to bring about the holy conception of God becoming man.

#### THIS IS ANTICHRIST

To deny the deity of Christ (one God with the Father and the Spirit) is to deny God. There is no valid religion or worship or faith which is not founded on the revelation of the divine being, and those who devise and invent religions which deny the Father and the Son place themselves and their followers in a perilous position, for this is anti Christ. "He is anti Christ, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John 2:22 23).

In his dialogue with the Jews on the bread of life, we have seen that our Lord makes no effort to avoid the offense which the doctrine of His own incarnation is calculated to present to unbelief. It is worthy of note that the teachings of such anti trinitarian sects as "Jehovah's Witnesses" are essentially Jewish in their

enmity to the doctrine of Christ as God incarnate. The same Judaistic tendencies are shown in the development of a legal righteousness, the cardinal feature of which is a tight and despotic discipline requiring obedience to an artificial code of behavior.

Indeed, the Jehovah's Witnesses have adopted most of the programme of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, even to those doctrines affecting the immortality of the soul (which, with the Sadducees, they deny) and the earthly nature of the Jewish millenarian kingdom. Nor are they alone in this twilight world of Judaism. In their millenarian conceptions, they rub shoulders with very many of the Lord's strangely bewildered people, who, blessedly looking to Christ alone for salvation, confuse his spiritual kingdom with Judaistic interpretations.

The truth of the incarnation of the Son of God is essential to faith and to life eternal. There can be no eating and drinking of Christ except in humble and rapturous acknowledgment of His peerless excellence and majesty as the Lord of heaven and the Lord of creation. Faith and worship and the renewal of the soul in holiness and truth are inseparably linked with the knowledge of Christ as Lord and Savior.

### THE PROTESTANT APOSTASY

Here lies the peril in which all the Christian world stands, especially that portion of it which claims an historic descent from the Reformation. The Protestant apostasy (for such the Reformation Churches have now become), has gone further than the Roman apostasy by denying or qualifying or reserving its judgment on the absolute divinity of Christ. Socinian sects, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, need not regard themselves as differing essentially from those Christian Churches from which they themselves sprang, for their "brethren" in the "churches" (which they despise for their trinitarian dogmas) no longer stand unequivocally for those dogmas. Even the Baptist Union of Great Britain has in recent times betrayed the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith by tolerating those who deny Christ's divinity or by sharing the collective guilt of continued association with them. The ancient errors of Arius and Socinus are risen again from the grave, for Satan will not allow the true doctrine of the incarnation to continue long in any age without bitter challenge. In these latter times he is busy assembling in all his forces for the last battle against God and truth, and his ultimate target as always is the doctrine of the person of Christ. The Unitarianism which destroyed the remnants of Puritanism in England in the eighteenth century and which devastated much of the American scene in the nineteenth now rages throughout all the old Protestant world as one of the symptoms of the satanic unbelief now dominating human thought. But as in the early days of the church, so now the unbelief of Jew or Gentile will not affect the final realization of the divine purpose in Christ: "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:3 4).

This realization of the divine purpose in spite of man's unbelief is a powerful thing in Christ's dialogue in the Capernaum Synagogue, as we shall presently see.

We have said that the men of Capernaum represented more than themselves: they stood for the nation of Israel as a whole in all its long history from the days of Moses to the end of time. They stood also for a substantial part of the Christian church almost from its foundation and showed in their "murmuring" the fundamental incapacity of fallen man to rise to the apprehension of divine mysteries.

These Jews should have been warned by the very terms in which the Lord addresses them: "Murmur not among yourselves." Was this not the very symptom of unbelief which so often characterized their forefathers who came out with Moses from the land of Egypt? There can be no doubt that the Spirit of

inspiration led John to record this significant word of Christ to diagnose the true spiritual state of the ungodly nation. The record points unerringly to that classic murmuring of the Jews which occurred almost as soon as they had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt. "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" (Exodus 15:24) (See also Exodus 16:2; 17:3.)

This murmuring was and still remains a symptom of inveterate unbelief. It led eventually to the disinheriting of the sinful nation, and it is not a characteristic of Jews only. The same evidences of inward rebellion against God are to be found in the sphere of Christian profession, and it is against all such murmuring that the apostle warns in 1 Corinthians 10:10, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer."

Israel's probation did not end with the gainsaying of Capernaum, but what happened there was an ominous sign of all that would follow. We have already seen how Christ maintained before the Jewish Council a strange but dignified silence against all that the false witnesses declared against Him. We have noted how He awaited the moment when His true identity as the incarnate God should be confessed in reply to the High Priest's adjuration.

#### BLASPHEMER OR GOD INCARNATE

The Lord's instant reply, "Thou hast said," fully conceded the charge. This was the real issue, and the only issue. It was as the incarnate God that He must die and Caiaphas had a better discernment. Sadducee as he was, than all Arians, Socinians, Unitarians and modern heretical cults who have followed him. He, at any rate, realized that Christ was claiming to be altogether above and beyond any created being. The Lord's reply confirmed His own incarnate divinity, very God of very God, one substance with the Father, uncreated, eternal. He could not be born of human father, because His incarnation was the entry of deity into His own creation; and the very act of "coming down from heaven" and becoming man transcends all human agency. The birth must be immaculate and virgin. The part of the woman (as we have said) was passive only. The act of conception was divine.

There can be no middle ground between Christ's declaration of His own incarnation and blasphemy. Those who deny His true deity make Him a blasphemer, as Caiaphas showed so clearly. This was the only ground of the crucifixion! Let those who deny or qualify the incarnation take heed, for they stand in imminent peril to their souls, be they Anglican prelates such as Montefiore, Baptist professors like Michael Stewart, or renegades from evangelicalism like Charles Taze Russell (Founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses.) No amount of trickery with Greek nouns and phrases can alter the fact that Caiaphas believed Christ had committed the supreme blasphemy and Christ was at no pains to tell Caiaphas that he was mistaken.

Holy predestination ensured that Caiaphas should be an unwilling witness to the truth. Prior to the arrest of the Savior in the garden, the high priest told the council that it was expedient that one man die for the people rather than the whole nation perish. He certainly had not intention of uttering an evangelical prophecy, but all the world knows that out of his evil mouth came forth a sublime truth. In the same manner, false and treacherous Balaam foretold of the star and scepter which should arise in Israel (Numbers 24:17).

#### THE RENT CLOTHES AND THE RENT VEIL

And when Caiaphas rent his clothes (which no high priest ought to have done), he did not know that providence had decreed that in this act he should show the Old Testament priesthood to be abolished forever. Here before him stood the true high priest, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, who would rend the temple veil by His death, as just now the last high priest of the Old Testament had torn his robes. But the Savior's seamless robe in which He walked to the place of crucifixion was not torn. "Let us not rend it," cried the soldiers, as they cast lots over their precious spoil. Whoever went away with the trophy that awful day was a Gentile: and he carried the robe away from Jewry to the Gentile world as a sign that God had provided a sacrifice, a temple, a Mediator, and a high priest for all men in His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

When the temple veil was rent, there was fulfilled the great prophecy of Daniel, which says, "He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Daniel 9:27).

That "week" was the seventieth week of Daniel's mystic seventy weeks of years (490 years), stretching from the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian destruction to the establishment of the Gospel. At the end of the sixty ninth "week," Christ was anointed as the "Mostly Holy" (a term denoting that inner temple sanctuary which lay behind the veil that was rent). The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and this anointing at the Baptism in the Jordan began that all important last week of seven years. "The midst of the week" marked the end of Christ's three and half years of ministry, terminating in the cross and the rending of the temple veil. The last half of the week was completed with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the apostle to the Gentiles, when the time of the full revelation of the kingdom of Christ had come.

Satan has been very busy amongst the Lord's bewildered people to subvert that great prophecy by the assertion that it is not Christ but anti Christ who makes the sacrifice and oblation to cease. Craftily he insinuates that Christ's work is not really complete, as neither indeed can it be if temple and sacrifice are to be restored again so that anti Christ can have the privilege of forcibly interrupting divine worship (as the millennial fable runs).

The prophecy is otherwise. The mystic seventy weeks are a unity, indivisible, not susceptible to any disruption. He who caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease was Christ, when by His atoning death He rent the veil and ended the significance of the Old Testament rituals. The sacrifices continued indeed whilst the temple stood, but believers knew that they had no efficiency in themselves; and the church awaited the day, when forty years after the crucifixion, Roman legions put an end to the temple forever. It is of vital importance to the understanding of the Word of God that these significant events should be understood. There are only two dispensations--law and grace, distinguished by their active words, works and faith. "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second" (Hebrews 10:9).

"These are the two covenants" (Galatians 4:24).

Only one who was as God could effect in Himself so great a change. Only one who had established the law by His perfect obedience could be the source of life eternal and justifying righteousness to sinful man. No person less than God could have the right or the authority to bear the obligations of the world. No one, therefore, but God could atone for sins. Those who deny Christ's deity deny of necessity the true atonement, and it is not surprising that unitarian sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses do precisely this thing.

## CHRIST LOSES NOTHING BY ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF

The dialogue proceeds in John 6, "Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:43-44). Christ loses nothing by the unbelief and rejection of Israel, for He assures the people in the synagogue at Capernaum that their murmuring was futile. It injured only themselves and did not affect the outcome of the divine purpose. The result of Christ's mission in "coming down from heaven" was eternally secured before He left heaven. It was the eternal purpose of God that His only begotten Son should have a rich dowry, a glorious inheritance, for (as He proceeded to tell His Jewish congregation) "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." The unbelief of Israel does not deprive Christ of anything which is His own, for He will obtain by the Father's decree and pleasure all that was ever covenanted. He must have an Israel if God should raise up the stones as children, or go to the ends of the earth and the utmost confines of history to find Japheth in far distant lands and plant him in the priveledges of Shem (Genesis 9:27). Let the hot thunderbolts of heaven's wrath and the hail of God's displeasure rain down upon Israel. Let the temple be destroyed, the city given up to the sword, the people scattered to the four comers of the earth God will bring in the outcasts and vagrants from the highways and hedges of long neglected Gentile nations, to the kingdom of heaven; and a new Israel, a new and elect church, will be established in the room of the unbelieving Jewish people. "The gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:3).

Let no one think that his unbelief deprives heaven of any values or dims the full glory of Christ. The tremendous increase in the family of God through the fall of the Jew from the divine favor was already foreseen by Isaiah and was forecast long before in the days of Noah. And what if the stream of mercy seems to be narrowed down today? At its lowest, its waters rise higher than at any time during the Old Testament era. "Sing, O barren (the new covenant which could bare no children until the old covenant had run its course), thou that didst not bear...." (Isaiah 54:1-3).

## CHRIST QUOTES SOLOMON'S SONG

There is a beautiful and mystic depth in these words of Christ, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Enshrined therein is that personal relationship and union with Christ which is the secret of the new order of creation. Christ is quoting from the Song of Solomon: "Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers" (Song of Solomon 1:4). The true bride of Christ, the Church is the daughter of election. Genealogical descent has no place here. They only are the true Israel who are drawn by the Father's grace to the Son, and in them raised that willing response of love to love's drawing and wooing expressed in the words, "Draw me, we will run after thee," Let all friends of the doctrine of sovereign grace recognize that the grace of God is not coercive but secretly persuasive. The irresistible wooing of holy, heavenly love overcomes all opposition, as the beloved one cries out in the response of her own love, as though she would break down the barriers of love eternal, "Draw me ... only so can we run after thee."

Those only come to Christ who are drawn to Christ through the Spirit of God, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love" (Hosea 11:4); "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3); "I if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Let us beware of limiting any of these predictings to Jewry, for they are all governed by Christ's unmistakable word concerning the New Testament church - "No man can come to me, except the

Father which hath sent me draw him."

## ALL TAUGHT OF GOD

"It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:45).

When the Lord speaks thus, He addresses all men everywhere throughout time. This word in Isaiah 54:13 was designed for an audience immeasurably wider than that which crowded the synagogue of Capernaum. The Lord was declaring the nature of the new covenant which He was about to establish by His death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. He was also supplying the key to the understanding of prophecy, for though the quotation was actually from one prophet (Isaiah) the Lord uses the plural, "prophets," because all the prophets proclaim the same message and their words come from the one divine source. He who is the Word of God spoke by all the prophets since the world began; and always, as here, He spoke of himself: "Every man that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

The fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah is a "gospel," or New Testament, chapter that has entirely to do with the spiritual kingdom of redemption, which Christ set up by His atoning sacrifice and His glorious victory over sin and death. Any attempt to give this chapter a Jewish interpretation is not only false in its exegesis, but is destructive of the true message of the "prophets."

That Isaiah's fifty-fourth chapter is descriptive of the Church, and not of an earthly Jewish restoration or some shadowy millennial kingdom on earth, is placed beyond doubt by its use here by Christ and later by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 4:27 as part of the apostolic argument proving that, prophetically speaking, Sarah the true wife of Abraham is the Church, "the Jerusalem which is above."

Paul quotes from the first verse of Isaiah 54. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bare; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." He shows in Galatians 4 that the prophetic meaning of the passage is that the new covenant of grace established by Christ through the shedding of His own blood has a more numerous progeny of believers than the old covenant. The prophecy of Isaiah magnificently portrays the great enlargement of the work of God in the world through the operation of the new covenant (Isaiah 54:2), its breaking forth from its Jewish confines to the limits of the gentile world; the newly revealed relationship of the Church to God - "Thy maker is thy husband. The God of the whole earth shall he be called" (Isaiah 54:5), the eternal nature of the new covenant of peace, as compared with the temporal nature of the old or Mosaic dispensation (Isaiah 54:10), and the superior spiritual adornment of the Church, the new Jerusalem, as compared with "Jerusalem that now is" - "I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and thy borders of pleasant stones" (Isaiah 54:11 12).

Then comes the great promise quoted by our Lord at Capernaum: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13).

What Christ is saying is that in His true and spiritual kingdom, the New Testament Church, there will be this great distinction to mark its members they shall all know God and be taught inwardly by His Spirit through the Word. To be "taught of the Lord" is to be born again of the Spirit. The true believer, whether in the Old Testament or the New, is in the condition described in Psalm 119:33 36 (Metrical version):

Teach me, O Lord, the perfect  
way of thy precepts divine;  
And to observe it to the end I  
shall my heart incline.  
Give understanding unto me; so  
keep thy law shall I.  
Yea ev'n with my whole heart I  
shall observe it carefully.  
In thy law's path make me to go  
for I delight therein.  
My heart unto thy testimonies,  
and not to greed, incline.

This gracious state of soul was imparted by the Holy Spirit to all believers from the beginning of time. The difference under the New Testament is twofold. First, it is imparted in greater fullness of understanding, since the Savior brought life and immortality to light in all the splendor of the divine revelation. Secondly, the New Testament kingdom is distinguished by the fact that it is an invisible and entirely spiritual kingdom where Christ reigns over all, and all within it are taught of God in contrast with the temporary Jewish kingdom of the Old Testament, which was an outward and visible institution in which, even at its best state, most of the citizens were hardened and rebellious unbelievers, held together only by the tight discipline of the law.

We should not overlook the fact that the division of the prophecy of Isaiah into chapters and verses is only a convenience devised in the course of time for the help of readers, but in the original what we know as Chapter 54 is part of the great prophecy which proceeds without a break through Chapter 53 (in which the rejection, crucifixion, resurrection, and the glorifying of Christ are graphically described) and is followed by Chapter 55, which describes the propagation of the Gospel by preaching ("Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."). Isaiah 55 proceeds to describe the scope and nature of the new covenant in contrast with the old. Paul's quotation of this chapter (See Acts 13:34, and compare Isaiah 55:3) shows that the phrase, the "sure mercies of David," refers to the everlasting dynasty of David as realized in Christ the Messiah through the overcoming of death.

The remainder of Chapter 6 of John's Gospel must now be passed over briefly, as much of it has been dealt with in our earlier exposition.

Christ has shown "the Jews" that their defection presented no problem to heaven, for it was anticipated in the wisdom of God. The New Covenant was decreed to supplant the Old, and Israel's unbelief was only the signal for the expansion of the Word of God over the whole world. "Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

The Lord concludes this section of His dialogue with another mark of His divine authority. He is the sole interpreter of the Father's Being, and will, and purpose. He alone can speak as One who has seen the Father. No man has ever seen God or can see Him, and it is manifest that "He who hath seen the Father" is of God, and therefore is God... "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father" (John 6:46).

The defection of many temporary disciples (John 6:60, 66) Christ uses as a further demonstration of His doctrine of divine election a doctrine which can by no means be explained away or modified in this great chapter: "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65).

That His secret knowledge extended not only to believers but to unbelievers is shown in John 6:64-70. "But there are some of you that believe not," and "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil."

True faith answers with Simon Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Blessed Peter! You speak for us all! Blessed believer in Christ! Where there is true faith, there can be no departing from Christ, for the faith itself is divine.

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Join all the glorious names  
Of wisdom, love, and power,  
That mortals ever knew,  
That angels ever bore:  
All are too mean to speak His worth,  
Too mean to set my Saviour forth.  
Great Prophet of my God,  
My tongue would bless Thy name;  
By Thee the joyful news  
Of our salvation came:  
The joyful news of sins forgiven,  
Of hell subdued, and peace with heaven.  
Jesus, my great High Priest,  
Offered His blood, and died:  
My guilty conscience seeks

No sacrifice beside:  
His powerful blood did once atone  
And now it pleads before the throne.  
My dear Almighty Lord,  
My Conqueror and my King!  
Thy matchless power and love,  
Thy saving grace, I sing:  
Thine is the power oh, may I sit  
In willing bonds beneath Thy feet.  
Then let my soul arise,  
And tread the tempter down;  
My Captain leads me forth  
To conquest and a crown.  
The feeblest saint shall win the day,  
Though death and hell obstruct the way.  
Should all the hosts of death,  
And powers of hell unknown,  
Put their most deadful forms  
Of rage and mischief on,  
I shall be safe; for Christ displays  
Superior power and guardian grace.

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