

JESUS—THE EXEMPLAR

The Child—The Young Man—The Father

Being Devotional Meditations on
HIM who was in all things made
like unto His brethren—Who trod
every bit of the Path they were
destined to walk—Who became
Himself first what He expected
them to become.

BY

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THESE messages were spoken first of all in brief outline at the Lord's table as the Holy Spirit gave guidance and power. To direct attention to the Son of God when His assembly comes together to remember Him and to shew forth His Death is but proper and suitable to Him and to His Father. Engaging the hearts of the saints with Him draws out their appreciation of Him and begets worship and praise, while it affords pleasure to the Father to hear His Beloved Son well spoken of. God is with every one who seeks to honour the Son and he who discovers most beauties and perfections in Him will have still more revealed to him "by the Father, for, "to him that hath shall more be given."

If the perusal of these messages unfolds Him to the reader—stirs the heart to admire and love Him more than ever, they will have accomplished their object, to the praise and glory of Him who is alone worthy; and of Whom we may well say:—"Blessed be His Glorious Name forever."

JESUS—THE EXEMPLAR

The Child—The Young Man—The Father.

OUR Blessed Lord Jesus is truly called 'Wonderful.' He is surprising beyond the ordinary. In all His ways and characteristics He excites wonder, amazement. Astonishment is aroused as He speaks. Never man so spake as this Man. His word is with power. His message is unique. There is nothing with which it can be compared. It stands alone. But then, He Himself is the Incomparable, and every word and deed of His partakes of His nature.

It is impossible for finite beings to comprehend the Infinite, save as the Infinite graciously reveals Himself, for no one by searching can find out God. He, who was called Jesus, was in the beginning God. He was the Word and was with God and was God. When Elohim created the heavens and the earth and said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness," He was One of the Three Who, in Divine Unity spoke these words.

"And God said," occurs eight times in the first chapter of Genesis. Our Lord Jesus was at that time the **Word**. By Him God "said"

and thus created the worlds. Without Him was not anything made that was made. He was the expression of the mind of God in the eternal ages before the world was. God is a spirit and that term of Deity includes Him. Who can estimate His greatness? Omniscient—all knowing; Omnipotent—all powerful; Omnipresent—in all places. The all wise—the source of wisdom and its embodiment. Knowledge belongeth to Him and all the knowledge possessed by man is but a little granted to him out of His fulness as He sees fit to entrust him with it. In Him, indeed, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

How high and great He was is beyond even our wonderment. It cannot be imagined, far less described. That He spake and it was done is a simple statement but a profound mystery.

Yet He “who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God but emptied Himself—took the form of a servant—having become in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross” (Phil. 2. 6-8).

No human mind can grasp the greatness of that stupendous stoop from Deity to manhood! How great is the distance! How immense is the change effected! But what shall we say of that still downward progression that led Him into death itself! He, still God—although in

fashion as a man—to come voluntarily—in all His love—into death with all that it entailed, marks Him as the wonderment of eternity. He is well called **‘Wonderful.’**

While He was here, in the days of His flesh, His life was full of wonders. He was the Shepherd Who went before His sheep. He trod every bit of the path they were destined to walk. He became first what He expected them to become. In all things He was made like unto His brethren. He took not on Him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham. As the children were partakers of flesh and blood He also Himself likewise took part of the same. He could say to His disciples; “If the world hate you, know ye that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15. 18). He was the Master. He left the print of His footsteps for His disciples to place their feet in and so be enabled to follow.

The Holy Scriptures are full of Him and set forth in a multitude of ways His grace and glory. One of these pictures of Him is the subject of these pages. It is the picture of our Lord Jesus as seen in the Truth concerning the Children—the Young Men and the Fathers.

Will you read first the Scriptures contained in the First Epistle of John, Chapter two, and verses twelve to twenty-nine.

Here is the order as John writes to them.

In verses 12 and 28 he addresses the whole company as Dear Children.

Then he writes to them in their three sections.

First: I write unto you, **Fathers**, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning.

Second: I write unto you **Young Men**, because ye have overcome the wicked one.

Third: I write unto you, **Young Children**, because ye have known the Father.

First, again: I have written unto you **Fathers**, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning.

Second, again: I have written unto you, **Young Men**, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Third, again: **Young Children**, It is the last hour. There are many antichrists. These things I have written to you, concerning them that seduce you.

He writes in verse 12 "I write unto you dear children, because your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake." The word 'dear' is preferable to 'little' as the truly 'little' or

'young' children are addressed later, and in addition, this message and designation 'dear children' includes all the believers, young and old. They are here placed on common ground, "because your sins are forgiven for His Name's sake." Here they can rejoice together apart from any difference in age or experience. There is no dubiety here: 'their sins are forgiven' and not because of any works done or merit acquired by them, but solely because of His Name's sake—the Name of Him Who by His death on the cross put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself and made it possible for God to pardon the sinner and to make the proclamation possible that Peter preached: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10. 43).

This is the same gospel that Paul preached: "Be it known unto you, men, brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13. 38). They have believed the message preached to them and consequently they are now 'Dear Children,' as they can now say with the Apostle John, "Beloved, now are we the children of God" (1 John 3. 2).

The claims of a holy and righteous God have been met and satisfied by the atoning death of the Son of God and they stand before God in this new relationship of children; and being sons of God, God has sent forth the

spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4. 6). They are sons—and can call God, Father, as sons alone can.

The Holy Spirit then singles out the Fathers who are described as having known Him that is from the beginning.

The three designations of—Fathers—Young Men—Children—are descriptive of the different types or grades of spiritual experience found in the Assembly of God. They do not refer to the mere natural ages of those addressed, but to the stages of growth and development in their souls, the degree in which Christ has been formed in them by the Holy Spirit. Who has not known of men old in years and professing to have been many years in Christ but who are yet babes—young children—who mistakenly think that length of days entitles them to be reckoned as Fathers and who, as mistakenly, seek to lead as such. How many Assemblies of God are groaning under such to-day? No wonder the Holy Spirit in the Hebrew epistle speaks of the difficulty of ministering to such—"who ought to be teachers but have become such as have need of milk and not of solid food. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the Word of Righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongeth to them that are of full age—those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5. 11-14). There is nothing so pitiful in the

natural sphere as cases of arrested development. To see the child growing up to a man's stature but without corresponding mental growth is a great sorrow—while in others both body and mind have growth arrested and while aged in years yet remain the babe.

Here, however, those truly reckoned Fathers have grown through all their preceding stages as young childhood and young manhood and have reached the highest heights of spiritual experience “They have known Him that is from the beginning.” “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 concerning the Word of Life—the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us” (John 1. 1-4). He who was **in** the beginning—the Word—who was **from** the beginning—Him they have come to know. They have passed through all the tests and trials incident to the acquirement of mature growth and have come to the source of all. They have reached the terminus. Farther they cannot go and here they rest in adoring contemplation of that Blessed One. They are engaged with Him—in all His peerless worth and pre-eminence. Their hearts are full of Him and their one objective is to know Him better—to know Him still more intimately. They gaze upon Him to behold the ever fresh and ever increasing vision of His perfections—His

grace—His lowliness—His holiness—His love and sympathy—His approachableness—His loveableness—His perfect words and ways that make His company the most desirable thing in earth or heaven. They are in love with Him. **“They know Him that is from the beginning.”**

The Young Men are now addressed—their distinguishing mark being that “Ye have overcome the wicked one.” They have been in the conflict. The enemy has put all his power forth to enfeeble them—to destroy their testimony—to hinder their proper and full growth and development. Many were his devices and subtleties, sometimes as a roaring lion—other times as a messenger of light—threatening and cajoling. If they are defeated now their further progress is at an end and the “Father” stage will never be reached and the crown will be forfeited.

But they fought on, and, despite many blows maintained the conflict till they overcame the wicked one and preserved their young manhood for God and His Son.

• The Young Children—the babes in Christ are written to and very precious is the statement made concerning them—**“because ye have known the Father.”** What a blessed relationship and what holy intimacy! They have not yet faced much of the conflict—they are still fed on the milk—the sincere milk of the Word—their spiritual intelligence is that of

the Young Child—but they have known the Father. God has sent the Spirit of His Son into their hearts whereby they cry—Abba—Father. They are at home in the family in all their simplicity and guilelessness.

Now the Holy Spirit repeats his threefold message with additions except when addressing the Fathers. To them the message is "I have written unto you, Fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." This is a repetition of the first message. There are no additions—nothing to amplify the statement already made. Why? For the simple reason that nothing more can be added. They are at the source of all things already. They are at the fountain head. They have known Him that is from the beginning and they can go no further nor can any higher or greater thing be predicated of them.

To the young men comes a reminder of what has been written, with a statement as to how their victory was won. I have written unto you young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you and ye have overcome the wicked one. Young manhood is the age of strength. The child stage has been passed through and left behind. It has produced its fruit coming out now in the properly developed young manhood. The Word of God has been abiding in them and it is by the Word of God that all victory is gained. The Word produces its own fruit and has all

the power of God in it. Thus they have overcome the wicked one.

The next three verses are definitely for the young men. They have overcome—but the conflict is not over. The enemy is too bitter for that. He has elements all around them calculated to entice them, to appeal to their nature—the things of the natural man. Hence they are warned to “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” The love of the Father and the love of the world cannot co-exist. The triple attractions of the world—the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life are not of the Father but of the world. These will all pass away but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The victory they had won they were to maintain by the Word of God abiding in them. This was the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God spoken in the power of the Spirit to maintain the truth delivered to them and to assert it against all who would oppose. The power of this Word of God in them would furnish them with the vision of all the glories of the Son and the love of the Father—a sure antidote to all the attractions of the world which the enemy would set before them. The eternal nature of God's things would overwhelm the tawdry things of a world soon to vanish for ever.

There was real danger and there is real danger for the Young Men. There is the

serious warning to "look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we wrought, "but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8) and to "let no one beguile you of your reward" (Col. 2. 18). There is need to heed the warning word of the Lord as He calls for overcomers—"Behold I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy victor's crown" (Rev. 3. 11).

Again the Young Children are addressed and to them of such tender age and limited experience is the solemn warning that "it is the last hour." The antichrists have already appeared. They had been in the companies of the saints—in the assemblies, but they went out to manifest "they were not all of us."

Their going out exposed their false character.

But the Young Children were not to fear. They had an "anointing from the Holy One and ye **know all things.**" All the truth was within their reach. They had the anointing—the Holy Spirit—Who knew all things and from Him all the truth may be had. They needed no human authority to decide what was truth. The Holy Spirit was **the** authority so that if they retained what was already delivered to them they would abide in the Son and in the Father.

The closing words are for the Dear Children not the Young Children and they—all the Saints—are exhorted to abide in Him that when He shall be manifested, we may have

confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming: that is, that the Apostle John and others like him may not be shamed away from the Lord should they witness their converts disapproved at His judgment seat.

Having viewed these three divisions and stages in the spiritual life of the Assembly of God, I wish to shew them all in the life of our Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh. There is nothing in the life and experience of His own not exemplified in His Own life—sin apart. As noted already, He took not on Him the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham. He took part of flesh and blood because the children are partakers of flesh and blood that He might be able to die and deliver them. That He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren. He passed through every necessary experience that He might be all-sufficient for every need of His own.

He was the **Young Child**. "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the young child His Name was called Jesus" (Luke 2. 21). The Word of God by the angel was fulfilled and Jehovah Saviour was none other than the Young Child of eight days old. Although true spiritual life was at a low ebb in those days, yet God had His remnant that kept alive the truth that had been delivered to them. One of these was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon and the same man

was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

To Simeon it was revealed by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen Jehovah's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the Young Child Jesus to do for Him after the custom of the law, then took he Him up in his arms and blessed God. In that Young Child he saw the salvation of God—a light to lighten the nations and the glory of God's people Israel. We read that Joseph and His mother marvelled at the things which were spoken concerning the Child. And Simeon blessed them and said unto Mary, His mother: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel and for a sign that shall be spoken against." Then came Anna, a prophetess—a widow of about fourscore and four years—which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that hour gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spoke concerning Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. To these select saints, God had revealed the truth of this Holy Child—that this Babe was indeed the looked for Messiah—the Salvation of God—God manifest in flesh. Having fulfilled the law of Jehovah they returned to Nazareth. That tiny bit of humanity was the Ideal Babe. Babies cry, for crying is the provision made for them

by the Creator to make known their hunger or pain or discomfort. That inarticulate cry is the helpless babies signal to the parent that help is needed. Often, however, indeed one might say, in all cases the babe at once learns that if it cries loud and long enough it is lifted from its cot and fondled and caressed, and it rather likes that attention and at these times, immediately it is lifted, the crying ceases—a crying, more often than not, without a tear. Well, that crying was a lie, as the Scripture says, “They go astray from the womb, as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psa. 58. 3). These were acted lies. But I am certain that in the life of this Babe Jesus, such a thing never once occurred. If He did cry, there was a real reason for it, He acted no lie. The angel described Him to Mary as **“That Holy Thing which shall be born of thee,”** and that Holiness marked Him in all His ways from the moment of His birth. He was the Ideal Babe. Time passes and we read in verse 40, “and the Young Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him.” There was no arrested development here. Hannah, Samuel’s mother, made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year—but not the same size every year for that would have indicated that there had been no further growth. Each year needed another and larger coat, for we read, “And the child Samuel grew before the Lord.”

But in the case of the Young Child Jesus we find a fuller statement of His growth in body and waxing strong in Spirit—growth in mind—filled with wisdom and the grace of God upon Him as His young life displayed only what was of God. He doubtless passed through all the experiences common to a Young Child but met them in a way different from the other children. His strength in Spirit meant the control of His Spirit over Him and indicated every part of His human nature in perfect proportion and harmony. Filled with wisdom He ever took the right path and spoke the right word. The grace of God upon Him shewed the pleasure of God in Him as He threaded His way through the difficult circumstances of a child's human life without deviating a hairbreadth from the path of the will of God He had entered upon.

He was, indeed, all a Young Child should be.

He is next brought before us as the boy or youth of twelve years old (Luke 2. 41). His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover and when He became twelve years old they went up unto Jerusalem after the custom of the Feast. They returned, but we read that the youth Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem. It may be that He, as was customary for boys of twelve years, had taken His place in the religious life of His people at this particular Passover, assuming certain obligations although this is not specially

mentioned. Yet it was what He would be likely to do—even as He was circumcised and all the Law fulfilled in Him and as on a later occasion He desired John the Baptist to baptise Him—to fulfil all righteousness. He has now assumed responsibility and there is now a change in His attitude to His parents. He is missed after they had gone a day's journey and not finding Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances they turn back to Jerusalem, seeking Him. After three days they find Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing and asking them questions while all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. When they saw Him they were amazed. His mother speaks, calling Him, "Child," whereas the scriptures in verse 43—calls Him "Youth" thus further referring to His growth.

He is even then '**astonishing**' and '**amazing**'!

"Child, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing."

And He said unto them, "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be in the House of my Father?" In this He at once repudiates Joseph as His father and for the first time makes public announcement of His divine relationship. They should have known Him better. There was no reason why they should have searched for Him. They should have known where they would be likely to find Him

—where His heart would lead Him—in the House of His Father attending to the interests of His Father. Here, surely is exhibited His strong spirit and His wisdom and how the grace of God upon Him is exemplified in the statement recorded of Him: “and He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them.”

His holy character is observed through all these young years. No one ever beheld any unevenness in that life. There was no display of temper—no arrogance ever marked Him—His obedience—His diligence—His uniform kindness and consideration—His unselfishness and truthfulness—His love controlled life called forth the highest appreciation in the sight of those around Him.

No wonder that John the Baptist seeing Him coming to him for baptism had to say: “Comest Thou to me? I have need to be baptised of Thee.”

Thus did He, a youth of twelve, display His grace. And still it is written: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (v. 52). Here wisdom comes first before stature and the display of that wisdom and kindred graces brings increasing pleasure to God and increasing appreciation by man.

The humanity of Jesus was sinless and holy. He was born holy. It was a real humanity. He was a real man, and His was a

real growth in wisdom and stature. As His body grew and brain and organs reached toward their proper development, so the wisdom increased at a pace and in a degree normal to Him. The union of Deity and humanity is a mystery known only to the Father. It is the mystery of Godliness—God manifest in flesh. He ever was consciously God, by day and by night—sleeping or waking—but in His Inscrutable Omnipotence that Deity was veiled so that in His human nature He could increase in wisdom and in stature—a normal man.

Thus He passed through the Young Child stage in a manner so eminently an example to the Young Children of His Assembly. How clearly He shewed that He knew the Father and had the anointing of the Holy One—and knew all things.

Eighteen years have now passed—years of obscurity but filled with obedience to His Father's will—hearing His voice—receiving His instructions—patiently enduring without a murmur all that life in Nazareth meant, until it should please His Father to indicate His next step.

The Young Man stage is now reached.

“And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age” (Luke 3. 23).

He is the young man indeed, with the Word of God abiding in Him—strong in His manhood looking back on those thirty years with no sighs—no regrets—no lapses—no failure. He

has lived a full life in the fellowship of His Father and has just heard His Father's voice from Heaven testifying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." But He has to face the conflict. The test is coming. He must prove Himself. There is an enemy who has never yet known defeat. He brought sin into God's creation and no man afterwards could stand before him. God's best men had to own defeat. Abraham, the friend of God—Moses, the man with whom God spoke face to face—David, the man after God's own heart and countless multitudes had to own their inability to withstand this dreaded enemy. This is the one, this Young Man about thirty years of age has now to face.

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness being forty days tempted by the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterwards hungered" (Luke 4. 1, 2).

Taking advantage of His hunger—the needs of His body—the devil brings his final weapons to bear upon Him, seeking to rob Him of His dependence on God by turning stone to bread and thus provide for Himself, but was met by the sword of the Spirit—the Word of God—"It is written."

Taking Him to a high mountain and showing Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time He promised to give them to Him if

He would fall down and worship him. Again the Word of God, "It is written" was used by this Young Man and again the enemy was discomfited.

Bringing Him to Jerusalem, setting Him on a pinnacle of the temple and now quoting part of the scripture he tempts Him to cast Himself down. But the Word of God abiding in Him came out in another mighty sword thrust—"It is written," and for the third time this hitherto unconquered enemy is vanquished and his power broken and he leaves Him, while angels come and minister unto Him.

The desire of the flesh—the desire of the eyes—the pride of life were all dangled before Him but found in Him no response. The love of the Father occupied His whole being—filled His heart. There was no room for aught else.

How intense was that conflict? All the enemy's resources were used in this most vital warfare. Every weapon of the devil's armoury was employed. Forty days tempted of the devil—on constant watch and guard—facing His relentless foe—fasting all the while and then the final onslaught that witnessed His brilliant victory and the devil's disastrous defeat. On that struggle His Father's eye rested complacently in His confidence in His Son and at His Father's command the angels came and ministered unto Him.

"I have written unto you, Young Men,

because ye are strong and the Word of God abideth in you and ye have overcome the wicked one." How blessedly true of this Young Man—our Saviour and our Lord—the Great Overcomer. Hear Him say, "Even as I also overcame and am set down on My Father's throne."

How He calls for overcomers! To them He promises the tree of life—a crown of life—the hidden manna—the new name—rule—and a place on His Throne. "Unto you, young men, I call."

We have seen Him—the Child and the Young Man, and now you will probably say as Philip said—"Shew us the Father," and I shall just give you His own reply—"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?" He had already said, "And he that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me" (John 12. 45), while in Rev. 1. 14 where His description is not that of the Child or the Young Man but a Father—"His Head and Hairs white like wool—white as snow." "The Father of Eternity" (Isa. 9. 6).

How true of Him what was true of the Father—"Because ye have known Him that is from the begininng." He said to the Jews, "Ye have not known Him but I know Him and keep His words" (John 8. 55).

And what a Father He is! "Having loved His Own which were in the world He loved

them unto the end." With what affection He addresses them as He unfolds the sorrow they will shortly suffer. "Dear Children, yet a little while I am with you—Let not your hearts be troubled. I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you."

With what tenderness He asks them after their night's fruitless fishing—"Children, have ye any meat?" And as a father pitieth his children, so He pitieth them, and a fire with fish cooking and bread, refresh the wearied and chilled company.

Then in that day to come with what wonderful joy and triumph will He declare, "Behold—I and the children which God hath given Me. 'Of Whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named' " (Eph. 3. 15).

Blessed Lord, Thou hast been all thou had'st in Thy mind for Thine own. Thou hast been the Babe—the Child—the Young Man—the Father—and in every stage of Thy Sinless Humanity Thou hast manifested Thy grace and Thy glory. We adore—we worship at Thy feet—Our Lord and our God.