

THREE SERMONS ... which said the same thing
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(ISAIAH 30:15; MATTHEW 23:37; 22:3)

It has been affirmed continually that the Bible is one book. From time to time the local color of varying scenes may appear to change, but the broad underlying principles of the Scripture are always in harmony. Sometimes identical statements may be found centuries apart, and the replica seems to be a bridge across the ages. About 700 B.C. God sent Isaiah to say, "Come now, and let us reason together," but the people " would not come." When Christ looked at the city of Jerusalem, He said, " How oft would I have gathered you . . . and you would not come." One of the greatest of the Saviour's parables related to the King's wedding feast, when invitations were despatched to many citizens. The royal host said, "Come, for the wedding is ready . . . and they would not come." Together, these Scriptures provide a striking sequence of thought.

God said, " Come," and they would not come

The prophet Isaiah stood beside the bedside of his king; he was very sad. The solemnity of that occasion greatly impressed his soul, for in later days he wrote, " In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord.... Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go (Isa. 6:1-8). Commissioned by God, the young man went forth to preach, and a study of his writings reveals three things. (i) A great desire. God longed to meet the need of His people; to pardon their sins; to place peace within their hearts. The first message to be proclaimed said, " Come now, and let us reason together, said the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. . . ." (I : 18). (ii) A great decision. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not." The people preferred their own ideas; they liked to indulge in sin. (iii) A great disaster. The Lord gave to them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. It is true that ultimately the nation was restored to Palestine; but before this was accomplished, many graves were left in Babylon.

Christ said, " Come," and they would not come

The Saviour was strangely moved as He looked at the city of God. A cross loomed upon the horizon, and soon the little sepulchre in Joseph's garden would be occupied. Jesus had come to look for the last time upon the city He loved, and His lament that day revealed the same thoughts expressed in Isaiah's ministry. (i) A great desire. " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. . . ." (ii) A great decision. ". . . and ye would not." There were times when even Christ was powerless. There were situations which defied even His capabilities. Christ called to, but never compelled men to trust him. (iii) A great disaster. " Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." When Christ turned away from the city He was indescribably sad. He knew that Roman legions would utterly devastate the place; the streets would run with blood, and He was unable to prevent the catastrophe. He realized that in the distant future the nation would exclaim, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord": but in the meanwhile, many graves would appear in Israel.

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The king said " Come," and they would not come

The palace was filled with excitement; the wedding of the prince was at hand. "And the king sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants. . . . But they made light of it. . . ." The Lord Jesus excelled in the art of painting word-pictures, and His hearers were very attentive when He continued, " But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed them . . . and burnt up their homes." (i) A great desire. God is to honor His Son; it is planned that the Marriage Supper of the Lamb shall be the greatest event in history. The news of the event has been broadcast throughout the earth, but both Jews and Gentiles are reluctant to accept the invitation to the wedding. (ii) A great decision. This Scripture provides an eloquent commentary on the attitude of sinful people. The ancients were concerned only with material prosperity; they were dressed in modern garb! (iii) A great disaster. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? " The Bible indeed is one book; it has one message. Wise men will remember that this message declares, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death " (Prov. 14:12).

Come to the Saviour now,
He gently calleth thee;
In true repentance bow,
Before Him bend the knee:

He waiteth to bestow
Salvation, peace, and love,
True joy on earth below,
A home in heaven above:
Come, come, come!

Bishop Taylor Smith's Barber

The late Bishop Taylor Smith was one of the most acceptable British preachers during the first half of the twentieth century. His attractive personality, his scintillating humor, his thought-provoking message appealed to innumerable people, and wherever he ministered great crowds listened attentively. Some of his illustrations were exceptionally good. Not the least of these was his account of the London barber who had certain things to say to his celebrated client. Recognizing that a bishop was sitting in the chair, the barber decided to engage the customer in a religious conversation. He said, " Do you believe in consecration, sir? "

" Consecration," replied the bishop, " what do you mean? "

The questioner seemed a little nonplussed, and could only answer, " You ought to know what I mean, sir. I was consecrated myself once, but it never did me any good. I never got anything out of it."

The bishop smiled and said, " I think you mean you were confirmed."

The barber apologized, confessing that he had become a little mixed up in his terminology. The bishop soon put the man at ease, and added, " Tell me about your confirmation."

The barber explained that during his school days certain children were to be confirmed, and to make this possible were to be awarded a half-holiday. This reward seemed most attrac-

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tive, and to gain a brief respite from school, he and his
friend decided to be confirmed. " So we were confirmed, sir;
but we never got anything out of it."

The bishop asked, " And did you get your half-holiday?

"Yes, sir."

Taylor Smith laughed when he replied, " Don't say you
never got anything out of it, for you did."

The barber hastened to add, " But, sir, I didn't get what
was to be expected. Getting confirmed did not do me any
good." The tradesman was puzzled when the bishop asked,
"What did you expect to get out of your confirmation? "
When there was no reply, Bishop Taylor Smith continued,
"Confirmation means strengthening. But it is not possible
to strengthen that which does not even exist. If a man does
not possess Christian faith, it can hardly be strengthened."
Then the bishop asked a rather pointed question, " Barber,
are you going to heaven? "

" Going to heaven. Why, of course I am going to heaven.
Why shouldn't I? "

The bishop replied, " But why should you?

"Well, I'm as good as any other man. I'm always doing
my best. I never do any harm to people."

The bishop said, " Is that all? Well, I'm afraid you haven't
a dog's chance of getting to heaven. Barber, supposing a man
came in and sat in the chair next to mine. Supposing he
asked for a haircut, and I took the scissors and started on
the job. What would happen? "

"Probably, sir, you would make an awful mess of it."

" Yes," responded the bishop, " but I would be doing my
best." The barber sensing the direction in which the conver-
sation was going, added, "But, sir, the more you did, the
worse it would become."

" Exactly," said the bishop. " I know nothing about the
art of cutting hair. But let us assume for a moment that in
some strange fashion you could impart your knowledge to
me; that you could control my fingers. What then? "

"Then, sir, you could cut his hair as well as I could do
the job myself."

Then the bishop explained, " Barber, our best is insuffi-
cient; often, the more we try, the more we fail. Instead of
relying upon our best endeavors, we yield our lives to Christ, that
His Spirit can control us. Then He takes our hands with which
to work; our eyes, with which to see; our lips, with which to
speak; our minds, with which to think. That is the Christian
life: to have Christ living in us." Soon the bishop
and the barber were kneeling together, and in the years that
followed, many people knew that the barber whose shop
was so near to Victoria Station, London, was a true Christian.
He became known as " The Consecrated Barber."

Our Mr. Schmidt

I was told the following story by a printer in the office of
the Sun Publishing Company, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
When a valuable printing press broke down, a cable sum-
moned help from the manufacturers in Germany. In due
course a young man arrived to repair the machine; but alas,
the directors of the firm refused to allow the apparently
inexperienced lad to touch the expensive machinery. They
sent another cable to Germany, asking for a competent
mechanic. The manufacturers replied, " Please allow our
Mr. Schmidt to handle the machine. He made it; he should
be able to repair it"

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