A Christmas Prayer

As we approach another Christmas, in this year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and forty-two, it is our prayer that the world's suffering millions may look back to Calvary's Cross to find the peace of heart which only the Christ of the Cross can give; and that they may look forward to that coming day, of which Isaiah wrote when he said:

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."


The prophet's message was but the foretelling of the promise of hope, spoken by "the angel of the Lord" to the shepherds on that first Christmas night, as they watched their flocks upon the Judean hills.

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

(Luke 2:10,11.)

We like to call the Prophet Isaiah's message of hope "Christmas Chimes"; for surely it puts a song into our
hearts, even in the face of bloodshed and strife in a world at war. Millions all over the earth will spend this coming Christmas in the horrors of the modern battlefield, or in the cruelty of prison camps. Millions more will suffer from famine, and pestilence and cold. Yet other millions will be trodden under the heel of the cruel conqueror. And yet other millions will never have heard the name of the world’s only Hope—Jesus, the Prince of Peace. It is our prayer that those who do know Him may ever more zealously make known His message of salvation; and that many may open their hearts to receive Him as their personal Saviour and Lord.

It is our prayer that every member of our church and radio audience may know “the peace that passeth all understanding,” “looking unto Jesus,” remembering His sure promise, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself.” Not until He comes back to reign will He be worshipped by all men everywhere as the One whose name is “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Therefore, even as we send this message out to our friends in the radio audience, wishing for each one God’s blessing—till He comes—we ask every one who reads these pages to join us in the last prayer of the inspired Word of God, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Rev. 22:20.)

—Louis T. Talbot.

THE NAMES OF OUR LORD

One of the most beautiful of the Christmas choruses which we shall hear over the radio and in our churches during the season when we commemorate our Lord’s birth will be that from Handel’s “The Messiah,” entitled “For unto Us a Child Is Born.” Even as we think of it, the music rings in our ears:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

It is as beautiful in its way as the awe-inspiring “Hallelujah Chorus”—majestic, worshipful, sublime! Handel must have been a devoted Christian, as well as a close student of the Bible; or he could never have composed this most beautiful of all oratorios, “The Messiah.” If you have never seen a copy of it, my friend, go to a public library and get one; read its pages; and you will find a masterful compilation of Old Testament prophecies of the coming Saviour and King; the story of His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven; and the prophecy of His coming again in power and great glory. Seldom do we hear the entire oratorio presented at one time, in all three parts. It would be the most eloquent of sermons, if we could only hear it all again and again; for every word is a quotation from the Holy Scriptures, set to music that defies description. A careful reading of Handel’s “The Messiah” will show that the musician not
only was a master of his art, but that he also loved the One of whom he wrote, remembering that

"His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

This one chorus alone is filled with "Christmas Chimes" which we would echo around the world!

A MESSAGE TO A PEOPLE AT WAR

When Isaiah wrote this remarkable prophecy, he addressed it to a people at war. Judah's wicked, idolatrous King Ahaz was on the throne; "he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (II Chron. 28:1); and when trouble came in the form of a confederacy between Samaria and Syria, designed against Judah, the children of Judah and their faithless king were sore afraid. But God had a faithful prophet in Judah, the mighty Isaiah; and to him the Lord said:

"Go forth to meet Ahaz . . . and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted . . . It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass" (i.e., this attempt on the part of Judah's enemies). (See II Chron. 28:1-15; Isaiah 7:1—9:7.)

Ahaz did not deserve this goodness from God; neither did those in Judah who had departed from the Lord. But God does not deal with His people according to what they deserve! If he did, "who could stand" before His holy presence? And the abundance of His grace was revealed in a special way to Judah's wicked King Ahaz; for it was in connection with this prophecy of Isaiah to the children of Judah that the Holy Spirit uttered two of the most wonderful promises concerning Israel's promised Messiah and the world's Saviour and King. To the "house of David"—not to Ahaz alone, but to David's "house," the prophet promised the virgin-born Immanuel, saying,

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14; cf. Matt. 1:22, 23).

And to the people in Judah who would heed His warning and obey His command God spoke again, in this time of crisis during the reign of Ahaz, saying that the Divine child was "Israel's only hope." And this is what the inspired prophet said:

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

Today, after nearly twenty-seven hundred years, Isaiah's message comes down from God to a world at war. Even at Christmas time, when we remember the birth into the world of "The Prince of Peace," nations are
battling with all the fierceness and cruelty known to man. All over the globe men are dying; civilians are starving or languishing in concentration camps or wasting their lives away at slave labor. All over the world there is pain; there is anguish; there is sin! Yet down the centuries still echoes the voice of the prophet of God, pointing fallen man to "Israel's only hope," even the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. If only the nations would look back to the manger where the Divine Child was born; back to the cross of the eternal Son of God who was "given" to a lost world; and forward to His coming again to be recognized by all men everywhere as the One whose name shall be called "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"! If only the nations would read and understand God's Word, which foretells "wars and rumors of wars," even until the King of kings and Lord of lords is back on earth to reign! But the nations will not heed the warning. Thank God! Millions of individuals in the nations today do look back to the Christ of the Cross, and forward to the Christ of glory as the only solution to this world's problems! It is to such as these, to all who will be born again, that the "Christmas Chimes" of Isaiah's glorious prophecy can give light and hope and peace, even in a world at war. For such as these—all who will love the Lord Jesus Christ—His own reassuring message offers comfort and blessing, "I will come again!"

Hitler and all his cohorts may think they can overthrow the nations of the world where Christ is named; they think they can stamp out Christianity; but no confederacy formed against God's people can stand. Christ shall one day sit upon "the throne of His father David;" and "of His kingdom there shall be no end." The message of Isaiah to Judah in the days of Ahaz comes down the centuries to all of God's children, "Fear not, neither be fainthearted... It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass."

"UNT0 US A CHILD IS BORN, UNT0 US A SON IS GIVEN"

The birth of the Child Immanuel is here distinguished from the giving of the Son of God. The Child was, indeed, the Son of God; but the language used by the Holy Spirit is significant. As a Child, in human flesh, Immanuel; that is, "God with us," was "born" in Bethlehem's manger; but as the Son of God He had no birth, no beginning or end; as the Son He is eternal! As the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, our Lord wanted to die for sinners. But God can not die; therefore, in order to "taste death for every man," the eternal Son of God was "made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Because He was born of the virgin Mary, without a human father; because God was His Father, and He was born of the Holy Spirit; He was the sinless God-Man. Because He was perfect Man, He could suffer and die for us; because He was eternal "God manifest in the flesh," He was sinless, all-powerful, divine. Let us never fail to recognize the clear teaching of all the Scriptures, that, as the Child, He was "born" into the world on that first Christmas; but as the Son of God He was "given" to become the world's Saviour and Israel's Messiah.

Satan has ever sought to get rid of Christ; yet today all over the world there are those who are remembering the Saviour's birth. It is true that Christmas has been commercialized; it is true that many will sing the Christ-
mas carols who do not know the Lord. Yet the carols are sung! All the civilized world is constantly reminded of the Christian's Christmas. Surely that fact alone is a silent testimony to the deity of our Lord! And then there are the multitudes of God's redeemed children who observe this sacred season because they love the Child of Bethlehem, who is the only Saviour and the coming King of kings!

There is another silent testimony to God's value upon the birth of Christ in Judea nearly two thousand years ago: All secular history dates from His birth. Even the infidel has to bear testimony to His birth every time he writes a check, every time he dates a letter. The historian, whether he be Christian or not, must write of the Caesars who lived "before Christ," and of Napoleon and Shakespeare and all the world's great men who lived "in the year of our Lord" at such and such a time. Every teacher of history must tell his pupils that the birth of Christ stands in the center of the ages, whether he wants to honor the Christ of the Cross or not. It is an irrefutable fact, which God Himself so ordered, to let all men everywhere know that honor is due His eternal Son.

THE VIRGIN'S SON

Matthew and Luke, guided by the Holy Spirit, have written the beautiful story of the birth of the Christ Child, born of the Virgin Mary. Poets have sung of the wise men and the star, of the shepherds and the angels, of the manger and the faithful care given by Joseph to the Infant Jesus. Luke has told us also of how Joseph and Mary fulfilled the Law of Moses, and took the Child to the temple when He was eight days old, to fulfill every single command given to godly Jews. Luke has told us of the adoration of Simeon and Anna in the temple, as well as of Mary's song of praise when she rejoiced in God, her "Saviour." To the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke we turn for this beautiful story. Over the radio and from our churches we hear it reechoed—this song the angels sang on the Judean hills, this song that still rings out its "Christmas Chimes" to a war-torn, sin-weary world. "There's a song in the air" at this Christmas season; and it makes our burdened hearts glad. Josiah Gilbert Holland has sung it in the words of his beautiful hymn:

"There's a song in the air!"
"There's a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!
There's a mother's deep prayer
And a Baby's low cry!
And the star rains its fire while the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

"There's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth,
For the virgin's sweet Boy
Is the Lord of the earth.
Ay! the star rains its fire and the beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

"We rejoice in the light,
And we echo the song
That comes down through the night
From the heavenly throng.
Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
And we greet in His cradle our Saviour and King!"
“AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER”

Beautiful as the Christmas story is, it would hold no abiding meaning for a world in sin if the Christ Child had not lived a sinless life on earth, if He had not gone to the cross to pay the penalty of sin for a bankrupt humanity, if He had not risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, there to intercede for His own, if He had not promised to return in glory to usher in everlasting peace and righteousness. It is the prophet’s reassuring promise that “the government shall be upon his shoulder” which gives hope to a world in sin, a world at war, a world in darkness and despair at this Christmas season in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty-two. Moreover, this promise of that prophet is but one of hundreds of like prophecies by God’s other prophets. It is but the fore­telling of similar promises by our Lord Himself when He was on earth, and by His inspired apostles after He went back to heaven.

“The government shall be upon his shoulder ... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

When Jesus comes, when “the government shall be upon his shoulder,” then there will be justice for all; the poor will not be oppressed; minorities will not be persecuted; poor suffering Israel will not be hunted and treated with contempt and cruelty; the wicked shall be “cut off,” immediately compelled to obey the righteous laws of the King! Today “the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty” (Psalm 74:20). In that coming day God’s righteousness shall cover the earth “as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). As we think of our Lord’s rule over this troubled world, we can but pray, in the words He taught His disciples,

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. . . For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

“HIS NAME”

The names given in Scriptures to our Lord are highly significant. There are many of them, because one or a dozen or very many names could never tell the wonders of His person and work. Someone has said that there are more than five-hundred proper names and descriptive terms used in Scripture to portray the Holy Trinity. And names in Bible times had much significance.

Today the names of men have ceased to distinguish them, or to signify their characteristics or their mission in life. I heard of a man who named his child “Dora” simply because a rich kinsman had promised to give the child a rich gift if she were called by that name. Had the father inquired, he would have learned that “Dora” is an abbreviated form of “Theodora,” which means “the gift of God.” Again, “Henry” is a name common enough; it means “Home ruler, ever rich,” one who manages his home affairs wisely and well. Yet all of us have known many Henry’s who have not exemplified the meaning of
the name. "James" means "superior"; yet how many bearing that name have not lived up to its meaning? History is filled with the stories of very inferior men named "James."

In Bible times, however, it was not so. Among the Hebrews, names had very definite significance. Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation, left the idolatry of Chaldea, and erected altars to the true and living God. And it was the Lord Himself who changed the patriarch's name "Abram," which means "high father," to "Abraham," which means "the father of many nations." Abraham did become the father of the Israelites, of the Ishmaelites, of the Midianites, and of other nations of history. And, in a wider, spiritual sense, he became "the father of us all" who believe in the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour of sinners.

Pharaoh's daughter gave Moses his name because she "drew him out" of the water. Jacob's name, signifying "supplanter," or one who takes the place of another, was changed by the Lord to "Israel," meaning "a prince with God." When he saw the ladder which reached to heaven, Jacob called the place where he saw the Lord "Beth-el," even "the house of God." When he wrestled with the angel, he called that place "Peniel," meaning "the face of God." All twelve of Jacob's sons were given names suggestive of certain conditions existing at their birth. "Samuel" means "asked of God." "David" signifies "beloved." We might go on endlessly, illustrating from the Hebrew names the significance attached to them. But these few suffice to illustrate the importance the Hebrews gave to their proper names. Therefore, they were deeply impressed by the many beautiful names which God gave to them concerning Himself.

For example, when He spoke to Moses from the burning bush, He called His name "I AM THAT I AM," indicating both self-existence and eternity. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He applied this name of deity to Himself many times, saying: "I am the light of the world"; "I am the bread of life"; "I am the good shepherd"; "I am the resurrection and the life"; "I am the way, the truth, and the life"; "I am the vine." And when He said to the unbelieving Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am," they sought to stone Him for claiming to be God. (See John 8:58.)

His name, "Jesus," means "Saviour." "Messiah" is the Hebrew for the Greek word "Christ." "The Lamb of God" speaks to us of His sacrificial work on the cross. "Lamb" is a name for deity; "Jehovah" is the Old Testament word often used for "Lord"; and "Jehovah" means "The self-existent One who reveals Himself." "Son of God" emphasizes His deity; "Son of Man," His humanity. As the eternal "Word" who was "made flesh, and dwelt among us," He told forth the very thoughts of God toward us—never-dying love. "The Holy One of God" tells us that He was without sin. "Redeemer" speaks to us of how He bought us from the penalty of everlasting condemnation. Then He is called "The King of glory"; "Shiloh," which means "Peacemaker"; "The Good shepherd," "The Great Shepherd," "The Chief Shepherd."—these three names signify His atoning work on the cross, His intercessory work at "the throne of grace," and His Kingly glory. He is called "the rose of Sharon," "the lily of the valley," "the chiefest among ten thousand," the One "altogether lovely"—all reminding us of His beauty and perfection. "The Nazarene," "the Carpenter" the "Servant of Jehovah"—
these tell us of His humble, lowly obedience to His Father's will.

Whole volumes have been written on the many, beautiful names given to the Triune God; but these will suffice to illustrate the importance which the Scriptures attach to the names of our Lord. They will serve to prove to us that the Prophet Isaiah and the people to whom he wrote realized something of the far-reaching implication associated with the names given to the promised Messiah in the message we are considering today—the message which we have chosen to call "The Names of our Lord." Verily they did ring out "good tidings of great joy" to a people who sat in darkness; for they heralded the coming of "a great light," even the One whose name shall yet be called, by all men everywhere, "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Like the ringing of a bell, they send their chimes down the ages, promising a kingdom "wherein dwelleth righteousness," promising a golden age yet to be ushered in by Him whose promise never fails! As these chimes of Christmas echo down the centuries, let us listen to their clear, unmistakable message of righteousness and peace and "good will" yet to cover the earth.

"His Name Shall Be Called Wonderful"

Our Lord Jesus has always been "Wonderful." Before the heavens and the earth were created, He was wonderful in His Being—in His glory and beauty. In Old Testament times He was wonderful in His patience and love with His sinning creatures. How faithfully He led them and taught them and chastened them throughout all the centuries!

He was wonderful in His birth; for He was born as no other human being was ever born. God was His Father; He was "conceived by the Holy Ghost." He was the "only begotten Son of God." A beautiful star led wise men to His crib; angels filled the sky on the night when He was born. Humble shepherds and learned scholars worshipped Him in His lowly manger. He was wonderful in His birth!

Our Lord Jesus Christ was wonderful in His life. He lived a holy, sinless life on earth. His Heavenly Father spoke more than once from heaven, saying,

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; 17:5).

Jesus Himself could say,

"I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29).

And His apostles ever spoke with authority in such terms as this:

He "was in all points tempted like as we are sin apart" (i.e., He was not tempted to sin). (See Heb. 4:15, R.V.)

He is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26).

Our Lord Jesus Christ was wonderful in His life!

He was wonderful in His works. Only because He was God, could He perform His mighty deeds. Moreover, because He always was, is now, and ever shall be the God of love, He had compassion on the multitudes. He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, raised the dead, cast out demons, comforted the broken-hearted, forgave sins. Only God can do those things! As the Creator, He...
manifested His power over nature, turning the water into wine, stilling the tempest, walking upon the sea, multiplying the loaves and fishes. Thus He showed His power over nature, sickness, demons, death, and sin. He was wonderful in His works, in order to prove that He had every right and all power to become our Sin-Bearer and Lord and King.

Christ Jesus was wonderful in His words. Even the officers who were sent by the Pharisees to take Him prisoner could only reply,

"Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46).

He always spoke the truth—the truth about the Triune God and His plan of salvation; the truth about things to come; the truth about man's moral and ethical obligation to God and to His fellow-man.

The Lord Jesus was wonderful in His death. No one else ever died as He did—a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. He died that we might live. He died willingly, gladly for lost, never-dying souls!

Our Lord was wonderful in His resurrection. In His glorified, yet very real, body Christ bore the keys of Hades and the grave (Rev. 1:18). He broke the bands of death, robbing Satan of his mightiest weapon. Because He lives, we too shall live!

He was wonderful in His ascension into heaven. Angels attended His return to His eternal, uncreated glory, reassuring His loved ones that He would come again. (See Acts 1:11.) The Father in heaven greeted Him with those marvelous words of welcome Home, foretold by David a thousand years before David's Son was born in Bethlehem:

"The Lord said unto my Lord (i.e., God the Father said to God the Son; for David's Son was David's Lord), Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psalm 110:1).

Our greatest High priest, even Jesus, is wonderful in His present ministry at the right hand of the Father; for there He "ever liveth to make intercession" for His blood-bought children (Heb. 7:25). He is our "Advocate with the Father" (I John 2:1). When we sin, He prays for us, chastens us, and restores us to fellowship with Himself. He guards and cares for us—and how patiently He deals with His own! He is wonderful in His authority, power, and love!

"And his name shall be called Wonderful" when He comes in glory to reign. The whole world will be filled with His glory. From all eternity He has been wonderful in the eyes of the Father and the Spirit, in the eyes of angels, and in the eyes of His saints—separated ones. But when He rules over the earth, all men will call Him "Wonderful." And His glory shall cover the earth "as the waters cover the sea." All that mankind has ever desired that is worthy and true, all that is good and righteous and just, all that godly men have dreamed about and more—these will all be realized when Jesus comes again. Longevity will be restored to men. Even the animal kingdom will live at peace; for birds and beasts and cattle will be subject unto Him. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall feed together; and a little child shall lead them. There will be no more thorns; "the desert shall blossom as the rose."

Every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree; the
The NAMES of OUR LORD

A Christmas Message

LOUIS T. TALBOT