

Chapter Three ~ The Promised One

Some people ask: " Why did God put our first parents to this trial when He knew they would fall under it, and knew the terrible consequence to themselves and to all their children ?"

The first and chief reason is because He is Lord and Master. He can do what He wills, and all that He does is not only right and good, but the best, as we shall see some day.

Another reason is this : Though God can never will what is evil, He can and does continually bring good out of evil. The fall of Adam and Eve, and with them of the whole human family, was a frightful evil, but out of this harm God has brought the greatest good. By coming amongst us and becoming one of us, in order to put right again what was so wrong, He has done more than put all right. He has given us much more than we had lost. And His best gift to us is Himself. Since the Incarnation we no longer think of Him as far away in Heaven, where we can scarcely reach Him even by thought, but as one of ourselves a Man who could be seen, and heard, and handled, a Man with a country and a family, with ancestors good and bad, with a Mother and a home; a Man with friends and enemies; a Man with a certain character and ways, with His likes and dislikes, with His sorrows and His joys. This Man is our God, the God whom we have to adore and love. Can we not do this easily now, when He has come so near to us that we may study Him and know Him almost as we know a neighbour of next door? Truly God knows how to draw good out of evil!

We must notice, for they are very important, the words in which the Redeemer was promised by God Himself. As soon as Adam and Eve had sinned, they, for the first time, were afraid of God. "And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in Paradise at the afternoon air, Adam and his wife hid themselves amidst the trees of Paradise.

And the Lord God called Adam, and said to him: "Where art thou?"

And he said: "I heard Thy voice, and I was afraid, and I hid myself."

And He said to him: "Thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat."

And Adam said : "The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion gave me of the tree and I did eat."

And the Lord God said to the woman: "Why hast thou done this?"

And she answered: "The serpent deceived me, and I did eat."

And the Lord God said to the serpent : "Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all beasts of the earth. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."

Thus from the beginning, and in the words of God Himself, are the Redeemer and His

Mother placed together, just as we see them in our pictures and statues. There is to be enmity, that is, hatred and warfare, between her and her Divine Child on one side, and all the brood of the serpent, the wicked angels, on the other. She through her Son is to crush the serpent's head, and the serpent in revenge will lie in wait for her other children, all those of whom her Son has made Himself the Brother.

As the Redeemer has His types or figures all through the long years when the world was waiting for Him, so has His Mother hers. And when at last He came, the word of God again places together the Mother and her Child. Those who seek Him find "the Child with Mary His Mother." In sorrow and in joy they are side by side. "Take the Child and His Mother," is the order when the Babe has to fly for His life. At a marriage feast "the Mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus also was invited." She followed Him about during His preaching. And when at last He redeemed the world with His Blood, "there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother." We must never separate what God Himself has thus joined together.

How hard the life of Adam and Eve must have been during their nine hundred years of penance! Could those who had known the paradise of pleasure ever get used to the world outside! "Cursed is the earth in thy work," God had said to Adam; "with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return." But hard labour was only a small part of their penance. What must it have been to see on every side, as time went on, the evil fruits of their sin; not only disease and death, but death in its most frightful form to see their first child a murderer, and the murderer of his brother! We can picture them sitting sadly hand in hand after Abel's death, recalling the time when wickedness and pain and sorrow were things unknown.

One comfort alone was left to them—the Promise, that Promise which had brightened their last moments in Paradise, and now shed its cheering light on the dark world outside. How far they understood what it meant, we cannot tell. But they built all their hopes on it, and handed it on to their children and children's children to be guarded as their most precious bequest. And when at last they left this world and went to that place of rest called Limbo, where the souls of the just were detained till the gates of Heaven should be reopened, it was to wait with eager expectation for His Coming who was to undo and more than undo all the harm their sin had done.

Century after century went by, and still He did not come. But the Promise became fuller and clearer, as a river, small at its source, broadens by the streams that flow into it. The race, the tribe, the family, and at last the time of His Coming, were made known. The kind of man He would be, His work, His sufferings, His death, were foretold vaguely indeed, here and there, yet with sufficient clearness to enable man to recognize Him when He came.

The life of other men is written after their death. But God, who knows all things and who had arranged even the smallest circumstances of the Life of His Divine Son, would have the main events of His history written long before His Birth. He was to save men not only after His Coming but before. His Precious Blood flows backward as well as forward, and by It, all

those who will ever reach Heaven, from Adam and Eve downwards, will enter there. Therefore, even before He came, God would have men know something of Him to whom the whole human family owes all the happiness it has in this life as well as all it hopes for in the next. They could not know Him as fully as we do who have the story of His Life in our hands and can study it every day if we will. But it is wonderful how much God did tell men by means of His prophets. These were holy men to whom He showed now this event, now that in the Life of Him who was to come. Were we to put together all that the prophets told of Him, we should find His Life was written hundreds of years before He came.

Men knew He was to be of the race of Abraham, therefore a Jew, of the Tribe of Judah, of the family of David.

His Mother was to be a Virgin: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us."

He was to be born in Bethlehem: "And thou, Bethlehem, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be the Ruler in Israel."

He would be meek and humble of Heart, compassionate and forgiving. "I will seek that which was lost, and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak."

He would go about doing good : " Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free."

In spite of His wonderful works and His miracles of mercy, He would be hated and rejected by His own people : " Despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity."

One of His chosen friends would sell Him to His enemies: "And they weighed for My wages thirty pieces of silver."

He would be scourged and spit upon, and buffeted, and crucified: "I have given my body to the strikers and my cheeks to them that plucked them; I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spat upon me." "They have dug my hands and feet. They have numbered all my bones. They have parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots."

After death He was to rise again: "For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption."

These prophecies belonged to God's chosen people the Jews, who guarded them jealously, and studied them with diligence and delight, those especially that told of the Messiah's greatness and power : " I will make Him higher than the kings of the earth." "Sit thou at My right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." They took these words to mean that He was to be a great king of this world who would make their nation the grandest of

the earth, and give them in abundance honours, riches and all the pleasant things of this life. But other prophecies quite as clear which described Him as "a Man of sorrows, a Leper, One struck by God and afflicted," they passed by unnoticed. And when He came poor and lowly, a King indeed not of this world, they would not own Him for the Messiah of the prophets, but persecuted Him and put Him to death.

There was another way by which the world was prepared for the coming Redeemer. As He was foretold in prophecy, so He was foreshadowed in types or figures, by which we mean certain persons or things in the Old Law representing persons or things in the New.

We all know that there is nothing like a picture for giving right notions and correcting wrong ones. A teacher who has anything difficult to explain—the structure of a flower, the plan of a battle, the family of a king—turns at once to the blackboard, and with a few strokes of chalk shows easily what many words would never have made clear.

God taught His people by examples as well as by words. In a number of types He sketched before their eyes the character of the Messiah and the main lines of the work He was to do. The likeness fell far short of the perfect beauty of our Lord's character, but it was a likeness still.

Innocent Abel, slain through jealousy by his brother, was a figure of Christ put to death through the hatred and envy of His brethren, the Jews:

Noe who built an ark, one only, to save all who entered therein, prefigured our Lord, the Founder of one Church for the salvation of men:

Isaac, the beloved son of his father, willingly submitting to death, and carrying the wood on which he was to be sacrificed, represented the well beloved Son of God led without resistance to the slaughter, and bearing His own cross on the way to Calvary.

We can all see how the following were types of our Lord:

Joseph sold for twenty pieces of silver, thrown into prison with two criminals, then raised to honour and becoming the saviour of his people:

Moses, saved from death in his infancy ; sent by God to deliver his people from a cruel bondage, and lead them safely through the desert to the land of promise; fasting forty days; giving the Law to the people of God; feeding them with bread from Heaven; delivering them from their enemies; working miracles for them again and again, yet saddened by their murmuring and ingratitude:

David, born in Bethlehem; rebelled against by his subjects; insulted in his affliction; followed by a faithful few; gentle, merciful, and patient.

These in their character reflect our Lord's beautiful virtues.

Others, such as Josue, Samson, Jonas, Solomon, in their actions foreshadow His. In many

of their acts we may see but little resemblance to our Lord's, and in some what is very unlike. But this does not prevent their being types of Him. All such types, and others, such as the Paschal Lamb, the Brazen Serpent, the Manna, are like little bits of mosaic that have to be pieced together to make up a beautiful and perfect picture. The Son of God Was not coming on earth in blinding light and majesty, as men might have imagined, but in poverty, and humility. It was to help them to recognize Him as God without the glory of God about Him that such an abundance of type and prophecy was provided.

Time went on. Nearly four thousand years had passed since the Great Promise was made in Paradise.

One Empire had followed another, conquering and conquered in its turn. And now the whole world was in peace, for mighty Rome had crushed every rival. But peace did not mean that men were happy. Never had they been more miserable. The worship of false gods had brought them so low, that animals, trees, stones, wicked things even—theft, rebellion against parents, cruelty, murder, bad passions of every kind —nay, the very devils themselves, were adored as gods.

The strong cruelly oppressed the weak. Men and women were so given up to the pleasure of soft, self indulgent lives, that their hearts were hardened against the sight of pain and misery. The weak and the helpless children, slaves, the poor, the old, the sick, were treated with a barbarity that only the most frightful selfishness can explain.

Truly the world needed its Saviour!

The Jewish prophecies were known far and wide, and all over the East there was the expectation of a Deliverer who was to appear in Judea.! No man knew exactly what He was to do, but He would reform the world in some way, set right all that was wrong, and bring a golden age to the earth.

Among the Jews themselves there was naturally a more eager waiting and watching. They knew the prophecies by heart. They could tell better than the heathen what the work of the Messiah was to be. And now that the time was at hand, the best among them were earnestly praying for the speedy coming of those Promised Ones, the Woman who was to be the serpent's enemy, and her Child who was to redeem the world.