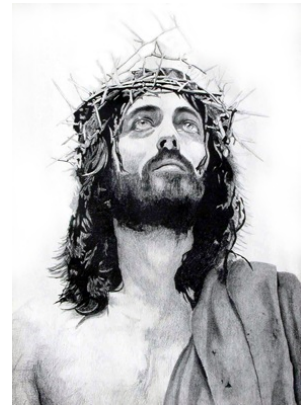


## THE MESSAGE OR THE MAN

Marjorie Lewis Lloyd



They listened with hushed harps as their loved Commander explained His plan to save a race that had rebelled. In grief and wonder they learned what sin would cost heaven, what it would cost the Son of God. He must exchange the light and glory of the throne for the darkness of a lost planet, the power of the Creator for the helplessness of a babe, the worship of angels for the ridicule of men whom He had created. He who knew no sin must assume the guilt of the world. He would be lifted up between heaven and earth --and angels must not intervene to tear Him away from the tree of sacrifice. Angels would not be able to look upon His agony.



No! There must be some other way! Angels fell on their faces with the anguished cry to God the Father, "Lord, let me go instead!"

The minds of angels must have spanned the universe in those awful moments in search of some other way to save man.

"Lord, couldn't You just make the world so beautiful, the sunset, so incredibly brilliant, the sky so blue and the stars so spectacular in the night that man would understand Your love *without sending Him?*"

"Lord, I say it modestly. But You have given me skill with the pen. You have given me a creative mind. Couldn't I write a scroll that would stretch from sky to sky and tell men about Your love ---*so that He would not have to go?*"

"Lord, couldn't a legion of us go down and take the message? We are skilled in speech. We would make it eloquent. We would make it forceful. We would make it irresistible. We would tell them what You are like. And they would listen. *Then He wouldn't have to go.*"

"Lord, You know the charms of music. Music touches the heart as nothing else. Let us take the whole choir down there and call men back. We could begin singing even as we move through the corridor of Orion, and let it swell into a mighty chorus as we touch down on earth. Wouldn't they respond? There must be some way -- *without sending Him.*"

But no. God sent a Man--the Man Christ Jesus.

God's real message to a fallen race --the only message that could ever be effective --was not to be written, or painted or spoken or sung. It was to be lived. The message was a Man.

God has given Seventh-day Adventists a message for the world. It is a decisive message. It is a judgment hour message. But there is danger that we may come to worship the message instead of the Person, the truth instead of Him who says, "I am the Truth."

After all, why is our message to the world so important, so urgent, so vital? Why must it be taken to every nation and kindred and tongue and people? Is it because in the day of reckoning it would be tragic to be uninformed? To be theologically incorrect?

No. An informed sinner is no better than an uninformed sinner --and no different except that he has more guilt.

Why does it matter what men do with the Sabbath? Why is it so tragic if men reject it? Is it because it is a pity not to know, not to be correct, not to be right, not to be on the winning side of the debate? No. When a man

rejects the Sabbath he is rejecting Creation. And when he rejects Creation he is rejecting the Creator. And when he rejects the Creator he is rejecting the Man who died for him.

Why does it matter if men reject the law? Because to reject the law is to reject the Son of God, who exchanged heaven for a cross because the law could not be set aside. If it could have been changed or disregarded or even watered down, then Jesus need not have died. When men understand that, it, will do more to rally them to the law of God than all the legal arguments the keenest minds can assemble.

Why does it matter about the resurrection? Simply to straighten men out in their theology? No. It matters because if there is no resurrection, we have no living Christ. And without a living Christ we have no message at all.

Why is it important that men know about the judgment? Is it to warn them that their every word and act is being recorded, one day to be played back to embarrass them before the universe? No. Judgment has to do with what men have done with a Man --with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why do men need to know that Babylon is fallen? So they can join a protest march against the churches? No. They need to know so that they can come out of the burning, out of the target zone where judgment is about to fall. So they can come out --at the call of the Man.

Why does it matter about the mark of the beast? So we can affix a badge of blame to an apostate power? No. It matters because by receiving that mark in the forehead, intelligently, or in the hand, as a matter of expediency, men are rejecting a Man. And the whole world needs to know how serious it is to reject the Lord Jesus Christ.

“What shall I do then with Jesus?” Pilate asked. And he asked the right question.

Too often we ask, "What will you do with truth?" And we have failed completely if men do not realize that at the same time we are asking, "What will you do with Jesus?" For you can't separate Jesus from the truth. He said, "I am the Truth." And men need to know that to reject Truth is to reject the Saviour. Then they will listen. Then they will come.

Not what will you do with this information. Not what will you do with this evidence. Not what will you do with these unanswerable arguments. Not what will you do with this scientific corroboration of Scripture. No. What will you do with Jesus?

There will be people in the kingdom who will be so uninformed that they won't even know the meaning of the scars in Jesus' hands. People who will look into His face and ask, "What happened to Your hand?"

They don't even know about the cross. But somehow, in some way known only to Him who can read the heart, they have accepted the Man.

The world doesn't even need our message --if it doesn't lead to the Man. The law can only mock us without the Man. The judgment can only strike us with terror without the Man. It is only the Man with scars in His hands, who pleads "Father, My blood" --it is only He that takes the sting out of the day of reckoning.

The second coming of Christ is only a frightening deadline, an interruption of dreams, unless it means welcoming your King ---a King whom you have waited for, a King who already rules your heart by invitation.

It is important to know that the dead quietly sleep until the resurrection day. That Scripture truth can keep you from fatal deception. But that glad day, when it comes, will pass you by unless you have known the Man --known Him in a relationship so close, and so unique, that our limited minds can never comprehend it. Think on these words --and try to understand:

"Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave, ---not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because,

through faith, His life has become ours." --*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

"Christ's love for His children is as tender as it is, strong. And it is stronger than death; for He died to purchase our salvation, and to make us one with Him, mystically and eternally one." --*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 519.

By virtue of this union. Mystically and eternally one. What sort of union must it be? We can never understand it. But we must experience it!

Those who rejected the righteousness-by-faith emphasis of 1888 thought they were rejecting a man-made theory. They thought they were protecting the landmarks. Instead, they were rejecting the Man who would have given life to the landmarks and made them the more clearly visible, and the more attractive, to the world.

Why did Pilate, a Roman ruler, have to be the one to remind us to behold the Man? He asked for truth to be defined and never waited for an answer. But his mind was indelibly impressed, and his conscience forever scarred, by the Man. It is, the Man whom men accept or reject. You can never wash your hands of a negative response to the Man!

It was a Man, not a message, that was hung on a cross. The people said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." They criticized the teaching. But they crucified the Man. It was this Man, God in the flesh, who lived a life so completely in contrast to their own that they had to turn their faces and steel their resistance or be drawn like a magnet to His charms.

Ellen White, you remember, in commenting upon the studies given by Dr. Waggoner in 1888, spoke of his exaltation of "the matchless charms of Christ."

The charms of Christ. This is a field of contemplation worthy of a lifetime --an eternity, in fact. The beauty and wonder of His character defy understanding. How can you describe a life like His? Positive terms seem to miss the mark, for our superlatives are so overworked and so relative as to be almost meaningless. It is easier to understand negatives sometimes.

To say that He is good and kind and strong --these words glance off the understanding. But when we hear Pilate say, "I find no fault in Him," we are amazed. It is incredible that on this particular planet a Man should live *without fault*.

*Never once* did He speak an unkind word. *Never once* was He the slave of temper. *Never once* did He compromise. *Never once* did He involve Himself in politics. *Never once* did He betray a friend or treat an enemy unfairly. *Never once* did He permit an unclean thought to contaminate His mind.

*Never once* did He permit His power of reasoning to be chemically dulled. *Never once* did He try to overthrow the religious establishment. He pointed out the sins of its leaders--but with tears in His voice. He wrote their sins in the sand --and let the woman go. *Never once* did He turn away a person who came for help. *Never once* did He crush out the narrow flame of hope that burned in a sensitive heart. *Never once* did He play games with temptation. *Never once* did He fail. It was when He was weakest that He was stronger than death!

How could it be? If only a life like that could be mine! If only He could just live it over again in me!

He can! That's why God sent a Man instead of only a message. That's why He sent an Example instead of just a sacrifice. That's why He sent us Galilee instead of only Golgatha!

Behold the Man!