

THE STORY OF A MODERN MISSIONARY TO AN ANCIENT PEOPLE

by

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CHAPTER THREE

THE LIGHT DAWNS

Halting between the two opinions, I decided to fast a day and pray God to show me what to do.

At noon time, when instead of eating I began to pray, I held in my hands the Hebrew Old Testament and as I cried to God my body shook and the book dropped to the floor and opened for itself. Opening my eyes, I looked down and to my great consternation, read from the open page in the Hebrew, Malachi 3:1, which says literally: **“I am sending my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me and the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the angel of the covenant”** (that word is identical with the word “testament”) **“whom ye delight in: behold, He has already come, says the Lord of Hosts!”**

I fairly began to shiver; like an electric shock the words went through my whole system, and I felt as if the Crucified One stood beside me, pointing to that verse and particularly to the expression, **“Behold, He has come already.”**

I was awe-stricken and fell upon my face exclaiming with all my heart, “My Lord, my Messiah, Yeshua, thou art the One in whom Israel is to be glorified. Thou art surely the One who has reconciled Thy people unto God. From this day, I will serve Thee.”

At that moment, a flood of light came into my mind and a stream of love to the Lord Jesus into my heart, and straightway I went and took a meal, breaking my fast and feeling altogether a new creature.

Results of Confession

Then I began with gladness to tell any Jews I met that I had found out that Jesus, the Crucified One, was our Messiah, and not until we as a people accepted Him, would we ever gain favor in the sight of God.

At first they thought that I was joking; then they said that I felt lonesome for having left my wife and children whom I loved so dearly, in the old country; my mind was affected and I was not responsible for my words. But as I persevered, they began to be more attentive to my condition and realizing that I was just as sane as ever, they persecuted me bitterly.

They said: “He is a traitor; he has forsaken our religion, our people and our God, and it would be a service to God if someone would lay hands upon him and kill him” (The Jews are no murderers, but their ignorant zeal for God knows no bounds).

They wrote the news to my wife in Europe and someone cabled a rabbi friend in the old country that I had become an apostate, which means a bad Gentile, whose business is to hate, rob and kill the Jews. It was a terrible shock to my friends in Hungary, and especially to my dear wife and immediate relatives. The Jews having a real zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, tried to do everything in their power to bring about an absolute separation between me and my wife and children so that they too should not become apostates like me. All communications between my wife and myself were stopped.

A Great Struggle

In the meantime, the persecution in New York was so great that I had to flee to Scotland; a German pastor from New York accompanied me to Edinburgh, and introduced me to Dr. Wilson, pastor of the Barclay Church, and remained there to see me baptized.

After having been questioned by the pastor and the elders of the church at a Wednesday evening prayer-meeting, it was agreed that I should be baptized the following Sunday morning, June 26, 1892.

That memorable morning impressed itself upon my heart with an indelible power. It was to me like Wellington’s Waterloo. I had many enemies in New York, from whose persecution I had to flee, but that day, I met only one foe who would have been almost unconquerable, had it not been for the prayers of God’s children.

Early that morning, about daybreak, I awakened with a shiver, and it seemed as if someone spoke saying, “What are you going to do today?”

I sprang out of bed and walked up and down the room like one suffering from high fever, almost not knowing what I was doing. I had previously been anxiously waiting to be baptized as I was looking forward with joy to the time when I could publicly confess the Lord Jesus Christ before men, but now a sudden change came over me. The voice that seemed talking to me was that of the great enemy of mankind, though, of course, he was so sly that I could not perceive at that time that it was Satan.

Very many questions were proposed to me rapidly one after another, and perplexed me so that I felt ill, mentally and physically.

He questioned thus: “You are going to be baptized, aren’t you? Do you know that as soon as you take this step, you are cut off from your wife whom you love so dearly? She can never live with you again. Do you realize that your four children, of whom you are so fond, will never call you ‘papa’ or look into your face again? Your brothers, your sisters, all your relatives will consider you dead and their hearts will be broken forever.

“How can you be so cruel to your own flesh and blood? Your own people will despise and hate you more than ever before. You are a stranger here; you are cutting yourself off from your people; you have no friends in this world. You will be left alone to drift like a piece of timber on the ocean. What will become of you? You will lose your name, your reputation, your official position.”

These thoughts put to me in the form of almost audible questions by Satan, whom I for the first time met as a personal enemy, distressed and almost unbalanced my mind. I could not sleep, neither could I eat. My friend who was with me, noticing this, tried to strengthen and encourage me in every way possible, but nothing availed. I knelt down in prayer to God, but that Satanic delusion was as strong as before.

Baptism in Edinburgh

The time came to go to church. My pastor friend from America went with me and endeavored to cheer me, but awful sorrow and heaviness were in my heart. I merely went to church for the sake of my friend, for I was almost determined to refuse to be baptized that morning, and put it off for another time.

The service began and the call came for me to go up to the platform. No one can imagine the terrible state of my mind, neither could I describe it. Walking up the aisle, I determined to say that I felt too ill for the baptismal rite and ask that it be postponed until next Sunday, but as I reached the platform, a sudden change swept over me, making me realize that my fears were all a fabrication of lies from the greatest enemy of my soul. My heart was strengthened, all the clouds disappeared, and I felt it the greatest privilege of my life to confess the Lord Jesus by baptism before so large a congregation, no matter what the cost might be.

This was indeed a wonderful operation of the Holy Spirit upon my mind and heart, and I could not understand at the time how the change was effected, until Monday morning, when I received a letter from that well-known saint, Dr. Andrew A. Bonar, an aged pastor in Glasgow, saying: “My people and I were praying for you this morning at our service,” and at the close of his letter he wrote that verse, “**How beautiful are the feet of Him**, etc.,” in Hebrew, for he was a Hebrew scholar.

I have kept that letter unto this day as a remembrance of that servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then I knew and understood that it was in answer to the prayers offered perhaps at the very moment I began to walk up the aisle, that Satan was defeated by the power of Jesus, who is the mighty God. The baptism had been announced in the papers and a rumor went abroad among the Jews that a rabbi was going to be baptized in the Barclay Church of Edinburgh.

This angered them very much, and after they learned of the country and town from which I came, they wrote a letter to a prominent rabbi there, telling of my apostasy and inquiring what kind of an outcast I was, so that they might publish it in the papers that I was not anything more than a bad Jew and not worthy of any notice.

Instead, the rabbi's answer came, warning them against maligning such a true and righteous Jew and that they should not believe any evil reports about me, for I was a leader in Israel whom they ought to respect.

The head of the synagogue and a few other Jews came to me with the letter and actually shed tears. They said, "The rabbis in your country do not want to believe what you have done here, that you publicly denounced Judaism and accepted the hated religion of our enemies."

They began to plead with me, begging me to return to the Jewish faith. I then showed them from the Scriptures that to believe in Jesus was Jewish faith, real Jewish faith, and that they had no Jewish religion whatever if they did not believe in the Son of God. They were struck with some Scriptures I quoted, and said: "We will arrange for a meeting for you and our rabbi who knows the Scriptures better than we do, and let him decide whether you are right or not."

They wanted me to meet them in their own synagogue, but the pastor, Dr. Wilson, who baptized me, advised me not to go, as he thought it dangerous; so the Jews hired a large private hall and came to witness our argument.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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