

Messiah had come. *Not yet fifty years old . . . seen Abraham?* The Jews misunderstood Jesus as if he had said that he had lived, in a literal sense, along with Abraham. *Before Abraham was, I am.* Christ claims to be an eternal, while Abraham was a created, being.

### Light from the East

THE SLAVE AND THE FREE MAN—The ancient world knew nothing of free labor in the modern sense. You can sell your labor where you please and to whom you please. But in ancient times working men and women could not sell their labor—they were themselves the property of others. It is easy to misunderstand this: it was really very different from negro slavery. A slave's position in the house was not altogether

unlike that of other members of the family. The head of the house had equal power over his wives and children and over his slaves. It was within a man's rights to sell a child as he might sell a slave. Nor were slaves regarded as beings of an inferior order; they were true members of the family and were often held in high esteem. And yet, as we see by this lesson, there was a whole world of difference between son and a slave. Among the Hebrews there was indeed a great difference between the few slaves who were Hebrews and the many slaves who were foreigners. The latter were captives taken in war or purchased from slave-dealers like the Phœnicians. The foreign slaves had nothing like the consideration and privileges of their Hebrew brethren.

### THE LESSON APPLIED

We learn from this passage of scripture:

1. Life on earth is dependent on the rays of the sun. Similarly, *our highest life, our spiritual life, is dependent on Christ.* If the sun were destroyed and the earth left in total darkness, plant, animal and human life would soon perish. Men would go mad. Physical light is all important, but not more so than spiritual light. Moreover, Jesus' light is for all mankind, not for the Jews only. He is a real Saviour.

2. We learn the real meaning of slavery: it is bondage to error, it is to love darkness rather than light. Is there anything worse than the slavery to which thousands of Belgians and French people are being subjected to-day? Yes, the bondage to cruel and inhuman ideals in which the German military leaders stand, is worse.

The Jews were very angry with Jesus because he appeared to insinuate that they were slaves, and they boasted of their descent from Abraham. Vain boast! This pride of race may easily become a terrible stumbling block, as it did with the Jews. They so revered the past that they could not see the glory of God shining about them in the present. Jesus asserted that they were the children of Abraham if they showed their great forefather's faith and spirit. So we are true Britishers as we reproduce the faith and noblest achievements of our fathers.

We feel the temptation also to glory in our denomination, and say, "We be John Calvin or John Knox's children," and we proceed to reject the voice that calls us to new labors and mightier ventures than were heard of in the days gone by. This is an altogether wrong point of view, and we must cast it from us. The past was not meant to enslave us, but to inspire us. We cannot play our part by pointing to the great pioneers whose self-sacrifice and faith have brought us peace.

No one can acquire for another—not one,

No one can grow for another—not one.

3. *To be saved is to love the truth*, v. 32. Salvation was an external achievement with the Jews, but Jesus indicates that it is an inner spirit of loyalty to himself. John Masfield tells us about the conversion of Saul Kane, the brutal prize fighter. The darkness disappeared.

"The earth and every common sight,

. . . . . did seem,

Apparelled in celestial light."

He was saved from the old vicious life and henceforth he "brothered all the souls on earth."

4. *One form of slavery which we must oppose is intemperance.* The war against this huge evil is progressing with astonishing success. A Dominion-wide prohibition law is within sight. It is humiliating to witness the slow