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Mr. Jones Meets the Master

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One of the most subtle forces of evil displays itself in the almost unconscious way we come to think of Christ and the Christian life as either "old fashioned" or "outdated." Satan has many allies who say implicitly, "Christianity no longer answers man's needs." Some leading churchmen, and the number apparently is increasing, talk openly of a "Post-Christian Era," and even seem happy about it. Arnold Toynbee, the famed historian, suggests that Christianity is no longer a live option for our times. This scientific, humanistic, and materialistic age demands a new approach to reality and truth which, Toynbee indicates, Christianity cannot furnish.

Christ came to bring individuals back to God through their own personal trust and commitment. The social betterment of a people does not adequately represent the arrival of the Kingdom of God! A State Church to which a national or racial group belong by virtue of physical birth in no sense answers to what Christ promised to establish among men. He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: No one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). He beckons us to follow Him with the following individual invitation: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). This personal experience with God through Christ brings us into an organic union with all other believers and creates us members of Christ's body (Ephesians 2:11-18).

But all begins in each heart, with the individual and personal decision of every man. If Christianity no longer is relevant to man's needs, if the religion of Jesus Christ appears "old fashioned" or "out-dated," those of us who have surrendered to Christ have only ourselves to blame. A movement is as relevant as the lives of those who commit themselves to it. Christ is as real and God is as alive to an unbelieving world as the individual believer or disciple whose regenerated and redirected life radically counters the accepted patterns of behavior.

Apparently Christ is not real to many people. My task in this study is to introduce you to Christ. And to facilitate such an introduction to the "Master," I have created a "Mr. Jones." He is any man sensitive enough to want to know Christ. He is you and your next door neighbor. He is the individual who ponders another dimension to life that he apparently has overlooked. Listen and think carefully as "Mr. Jones meets the Master."

"Mr. Jones, something will happen to you when you meet the Master." Consider for a moment the life He lived -- a life, He stated repeatedly, lived for others (Matthew 20:28). To carefully examine the life of Christ is to recognize that something happened to Christ for your benefit. Isaiah predicted of Him: "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:3-6).

Through the Holy Spirit's guidance Isaiah accurately portrayed the burdens Christ bore during His earthly life. The Gospels authenticate every description in this poignant reading. "Mr. Jones, something happened to
Christ for you.” Peter, in his First Epistle, says, “Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

Your sins will be taken away when you meet the Master. John, the Baptist, pointed to Jesus on one occasion and remarked to his own followers, “Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are reminded that “now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26). “When you meet the Master, Mr. Jones, you will experience the only true, spiritual cleans­ing available for today’s man.”

“...a peace for your life, Mr. Jones, that nothing else can.” The foundation for true tranquility was stated by Isaiah many years ago. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3). That very friendship with God that Christ offers all obedient men brings into existence this quality of heart. Paul explains, in Colossians 1:19, 20: “For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. To know God through Christ is to enjoy the “peace of God” (Philippians 4:7). Such a state of being or frame of mind guards our “hearts” and our “thoughts in Christ Jesus.”

“...will happen to you, Mr. Jones, when you meet the Master.” He will take away your sin, set your soul at rest, create a friendship with God for you, and provide triumphant peace. All this, and so much more — more than we can ask or think — is ours when we meet the Master.

“...something has happened to others who have met Christ.” The personal ministry of our Lord was one continuous bestowal of power and healing to misguided, confused, diseased, lame, and sinful humanity. Everywhere He went, men were touched and lives were changed. No man ever met the Master without being affected! Some ran right to Him even to taking His life, but others surrendered to God through Him for changes that made life worth living for them.

Some were changed physically. The Apostle Peter’s mother-in-law was sick with a fever when the Lord “touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she arose, and ministered unto” Jesus (Matthew 8:14, 15). Lepers healed, blind given sight, dead raised, lame strengthened — these are but a few of the many joyous, inexpressible moments when Jesus effected physical changes in men’s lives.

Others were changed spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. No phenomenon of the ancient world is more certainly attested than demon possession. Men were driven out of their senses, souls were crushed, and intellects blighted by this evil power. Matthew, like all the Evangelists, records a number of healings of demon possession. At Capernaum, he tells us, “When even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases” (Matthew 8:16, 17).

One man, Luke records in his Gospel, was so torn by demons that his name was Legion, in keeping with the many evil spirits that inhabited him (Luke 8:26-29). “For a long time he had worn no clothes, and abode not in any house, but in the tombs,” along the eastern cliffs of the Sea of Galilee. At times this man had to be “bound with chains and fetters” but Christ cast the demons from him, Luke says, “And the demons came out from the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd rushed down the steep into the lake, and were drowned” (Luke 8:33). From that day forward the man was seen living among men “in his right mind” (Luke 8:35). He met the Master and something happened to him.

All who met and accepted Christ were changed spiritually. Our Lord possessed authority on earth to forgive sins, as He explained on the occasion of healing the palsied man (Luke 5:23-25). All authority belonged to Christ as God’s son. He could and did forgive those who came seeking and surrendering. Christ, however, was also concerned about the time following His personal life and ministry. How would men be changed then and now?

Christ made provision for the work and teachings of His authorized teachers, the Apostles, and for all subsequent Christians in the Great Commission. Matthew records this charge in the following words, “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo. I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Throughout His ministry, Christ instructed the Apostles. These instructions are recorded in the Gospels with further revelations made by the Holy Spirit for us in the Epistles and Revelation. Of Christ’s will for us we read: “And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there...” (Hebrews 9:15-17).
“Following Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension, men continued to meet the Master, Mr. Jones, in the preaching of Him and His message by His inspired followers.” The Acts of the Apostles is the Holy Spirit’s casebook of men and women who met the Master and had something wonderful happen to them.

The Jews attending the Pentecost Festival at Jerusalem were the first to experience this. They listened to the Apostles preach Christ, in Acts 2, and then responded to the Apostolic direction, “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Three thousand persons responded that day and were baptized into Christ.

Later at Samaria as Philip preached Christ, men and women were baptized as they came to believe his messages of Christ (Acts 8:5, 12). Other examples like the Ethiopian nobleman, (Acts 8), Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9, 22), and the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16), reveal one startling thing: when men heard the Gospel of Christ and responded in faith, repentance, confession, and baptism a great change overwhelmed them. “Something happened, Mr. Jones, when these people met the Master, and the way they met Him is the way we must meet Him today!”

“Only two things, Mr. Jones, remain necessary for your successful meeting of the Master.” First, I must ask, “Do you want to meet Him?” Salvation is only for those who will call on the Lord (Act 2:21; Romans 10:13-15). But to call on the Lord one must believe in the Lord. To believe in Christ requires that we listen, study, and accept the testimony and teachings of Christ (Romans 10:14-17). Out of a full faith and willing surrender will you call on the Lord? Jesus promises to fully answer every question we sincerely ask (Matthew 7:7,8).

No genuine truth-seeker need wait longer for the assurance of Christ’s forgiveness and presence. Turn to the New Testament, the covenant of Christ, ask, seek, knock and the answers will flood into your mind and soul.

“Is this question really necessary you ask?” Yes, Mr. Jones, the Roman Governor, Felix, heard Paul “concerning the faith in Christ Jesus.” But as the Apostle “reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me” (Acts 24:24,25). Later, King Agrippa stated to the same preacher, “With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian” (Acts 26:28). Neither of these men, like so many, really wanted to meet the Master.

Second, I must ask, “Do you know how to meet the Master?” A few moments ago we pointed to Christ’s preparation for the era following His earthly ministry. In the Great Commission and other teachings the Master made clear the way we surrender to Him or meet Him.

Meet the Master today in obedient trust. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys (John 3:16; 3:36). The Philippian Jailor who met the Master, as do we, was told to believe. Following the proclamation of the Gospel to him and his family, and after his repentance is suggested and his baptism occurs, the Bible then, and only then, states that he is a believer in God (Acts 16:30-34).

Meet the Master in genuine repentance. Jesus taught, “Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish” (Luke 13:3). Peter, under the commission of Christ and the direction of the Holy Spirit, commanded, “Repent ye” (Acts 2:38). Repentance is that decision of the will and redirection of the body that represents a complete change in attitude toward sin and toward God.

Meet the Master in total commitment. Jesus warned, “ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake; but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” John the Apostle was moved to write, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). There is no more serious decision than the one to meet Jesus. To know the Master is to live for Him completely and unreservedly.

“Meeting the Master, Mr. Jones, is not a difficult introduction. In fact it can be the easiest of your life.” Jesus already extends His hand, His sacrificed life, His saving blood, His Father’s friendship, His plan for the remainder of your life. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” Jesus says (Revelation 3:20). Any man who will hear His knock or recognize His offer of friendship and respond obediently to His will in obedient trust, genuine repentance, and total commitment will know the life-changing, destiny-determining experience that occurs when “Mr. Jones Meets the Master.”