

## **"The Son of God Must Be Reverenced"**

by  
**Daniel A. Clark**

***"They will reverence my son."***  
**Matthew 21:37**

Our Lord, in the context, represents the ingratitude and the barrenness of the Jewish church by a parable of a vineyard leased for several successive years to unworthy husbandmen, who would not yield the owner any of its fruits but treated unmercifully every servant sent to receive them. They *"took his servants and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. But, last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, 'They will reverence my son.' But they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."*

We read that the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and Judah his pleasant plant. He had given them his written word, and had sent among them his prophets. He had displayed before them his glory and had, as it were, surrounded them by a munition of rocks. The early and the latter rains had rendered their lands fertile, and the blessing of God had prospered them in all that they set their hands to do. Thus Israel was emphatically a vineyard. But when God had a right to expect that the vines he had planted and nourished would bring forth grapes, they brought forth wild grapes. The very people he had chosen killed his prophets, polluted his worship, and hewed down his altars, and finally imbrued [stained] their hands in the blood of his Son.

Hence the parable, delivered by him who spoke as never man spake, must have had amazing point and force. It aroused their anger, and they would at once have laid hands on him if they had not feared the multitude. God had a right to expect that they would welcome to their sanctuary the promised Redeemer, and would hail his birth as the pledge of their redemption. But in their cruelties to the Son of God they acted out the native temper of the human heart, and showed themselves to be just such men as lived before and have lived since the period of the Saviour's advent. What is said of Israel may be said of men in all ages--*It might have been presumed that they would treat kindly the Son of God.*

This doctrine may be established by the following considerations.

1. That men would treat him kindly might have been justly presumed *from the divinity and glory of his highest nature*. He had a divine as well as human nature. He was "God manifest in the flesh." Previous to his coming, it had been as distinctly asserted [Isaiah 9:6] that he was divine as that he would be human. That prediction of him-- *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,"*-- had been read by the posterity of Abraham, had foretold him in his divine and in his human character. They had reason to expect a Saviour, who built the worlds, and who governs the worlds he built. Hence the thought of treating him with contempt was impious--like offering direct insult to Jehovah. And he had no sooner appeared than both his natures became manifest. As man he hungered, while as God he created bread to feed the multitude. As man he thirsted, but as God he converted the water into wine. As man he

could suffer and bleed, and died; while as God he could make the sufferer whole, and even summon the dead from their graves. Thus the accusers, the judges, and the executioners of the Lord Jesus could have no want [lack] of evidence that he was the mighty God. Hence, it might have been presumed that if he must die, God himself must slay him. He must come to his sepulchre by the immediate hand of Omnipotence. No one would dare to betray him, no soldiery would have hardihood enough to arrest him, no miscreant would sit to judge him, no multitude would insult him, none would dare to crucify him. And in all this we should seem to reason correctly, carrying ourselves back to the period before his coming; and still we should reason contrary to matters of fact.

We should have said (anterior [previous] to his offering himself to men as their Mediator and their friend) that they would all accept his proffered friendship. When God himself offers to save, how can man reject him? He who now stretches out his hands to the wretched and the lost of my readers is the same infinite Redeemer who called Lazarus from the grave, who fed the multitude, who stilled the waves, who burst the bands of death, and proved his divinity by ascending triumphant on high. Angels and other beings who might know what an offer men would thus have of salvation by Jehovah himself, could not have believed that sinners would treat him as they do--that from Sabbath to Sabbath they would hear his overtures and turn their back upon him. They would not have conceived it possible that men, after all he has done, would question his divinity, and rob him of his glory, and persecute his people.

If God should render himself visible and stand from Sabbath to Sabbath with pardons in his hand, pressing men to accept forgiveness and live, the obstinacy of sinners would appear just what it is. For one who is divine does thus stand. He appropriates to himself all the glories of the Godhead, has the titles, does the works, possesses the attributes, receives the worship, and claims the honors of the Father. He is adored in heaven under the appellation of the Lamb, in every anthem. And still he stands knocking unheeded at the door of the sinner's heart till his head is wet with the dew and his locks with the drops of the night, till we hardly know which is the most surprising--his condescension or the sinners obstinacy. "They will reverence my son."

2. It might have been presumed that the Lord Jesus would be kindly treated by men *from the perfect excellence of his character as a man*. There was nothing in him to provoke the anger of good beings. There was neither pride, nor jealousy, nor selfishness, nor passion, nor any of those evil affections that so often involve men in disgraceful broils. He was meek and lowly of mind. He had a character of perfect loveliness. His lips were charged with blessings and not with curses: "*There was no guile found in his mouth.*" He loved the souls of men more than he loved his life. There was nothing in him for men to blame or quarrel with; but [there was] everything that could be desired to draw forth their strongest emotions of gratitude and love.

Who could conceive of a race of beings so vile that they would quarrel with an angel! Yet angels have no such worth as was found in the Son of God. The prophets had human nature left and might provoke the rage of their enemies and tantalize their persecutors. They might demand the fruit of the vineyard in a manner not the most condescending and kind, and might contribute by their own unworthy conduct to fan the fires that were kindling to consume them. And the apostles were men of like passions with those who mocked them and stoned them. While they demanded boldly and promptly the fruit of the vineyard, they

might, perhaps, sometimes make the demand rudely. But "they will reverence my *son*." Nothing that was wrong in prophets and apostles was found in him; and what was wanting in them was in him. He made every doctrine plain and every duty clear and obvious. He never pressed the conscience till he had enlightened the understanding, nor used an argument that was not sound and good. His honesty, and integrity, and wisdom entitled him to the credit and the kindness of all men.

Now, are ungodly men aware that it is this same kind and good Redeemer who now offers to conduct them to the abodes of glory, but whose kindness they spurn and whose love they despise? Could it have been believed by those who knew him and adored him that men would thus treat him, as do all the impenitent? "They *will* reverence my *son*."

3. It might have been presumed that men would treat kindly the Lord Jesus *from the reasonableness of his claims*. He came not to reap where he had not sown or gather where he had not strewed. He came not to demand allegiance when another had a better right to the sceptre than himself. He came not to a world that had another for its creator, its benefactor, and redeemer. He is emphatically represented as having come "to his own, but his own received him not." This world belongs to the Lord Jesus from its foundation to its top-stone. To him pertain the wisdom of having planned it, the glory of having built it, the right to govern it, and the authority to judge it. All creatures in him live, and move, and have their being. Hence he has a right to our services, independently on [of] his redeeming right. The breath he gives he may require to utter itself in praise; the arm he nerves he may tax with duty; and the eye he enlightens he may reasonably expect to regard him with perpetual complacency [willing compliance].

And when we take into account the ransom price he paid--his own blood by which he purchased anew the world that was his before--his claim to us and ours is too manifest to be disputed. "He gave himself a ransom for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." In demanding our hearts, then, he demands what is his by a double right--the right of creation and of purchase. We owe to him all we have, and all we are, and all we hope for. We can adore no other sovereign without treason against him, and serve no other master without robbery. All the angels of God are directed to worship him; and if angels--who are his by feebler ties--must pay him supreme respect, then his right to us and his property in us none but devils surely can have the audacity to question. Hence, from the justness of his claims it might have been presumed that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ. The vineyard and all its fruits are his.

4. It might have been presumed that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ *from the condescending kindness of his intentions*. He stood in no need of us. He would have had an empire large enough to be the organ of his praise if we had perished. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." And if men had been passed by and not redeemed, he would no doubt have drawn out to view in some other way his mercy and his wisdom, which now display themselves in the economy of redemption. He might have redeemed, for aught we know, the lost angels. Or might have displayed redemption among the population of some other forlorn and ruined world. Or [He] might have revealed his gracious character to us, as he has his eternity, through the word of inspiration. Christ was not dependent on us either for the stability of his throne, or the promulgation of his glory, or the felicity [happiness] of his being. No motive brought him to our world but pure benevolence. He "so loved the world" that he gave himself as its ransom. Its miseries

moved his pity, and he stooped to help us. He would not have come, had he not been kind and gracious. True, he showed a special regard to the law--would have it honored, would not allow one jot or tittle of it to fail; and hence he may be viewed as having come "to establish the law." But it must be remembered that the law might have been honored in its execution upon the guilty, so that independently on [of] the idea of saving sinners there was no need of the death of Christ in order to honor the law. Hence his errand into our world was emphatically an errand of love. *"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

The love of Christ was the basis of the covenant of redemption. It led him to lay aside his glory and cover himself with a veil of flesh, and become "acquainted with grief." *"Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich."* He who built all worlds condescended to say of himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay his head." Thus, "by grace are we saved."

Now, it might have been presumed that the Lord Jesus Christ--on an errand so benevolent--would have been treated well. His design was too kind to deserve any other than the kindest and most prompt reception. Had he gone to devils instead of men, it would seem impossible but they must have received him kindly when on such an errand, with such heavenly designs. The very pit, it would seem, must have echoed with his praise. Hence, if men have a better character, as they boast they have, ask them how they receive the message of divine mercy. Does the Lord Jesus possess the throne of your heart? Is he the sovereign object of your fear, your love, your hope, and your worship? If not, then cast from you that exalted opinion of yourself, which raises you a [mere] single degree above the tenants of the pit.

5. It might have been presumed that men would treat well the Lord Jesus Christ *from his known ability to save*. Had he come in such weakness as would have rendered the enterprise doubtful on which he had entered, then there might have been a temptation to despise him. Had he failed in making the atonement, or been unable to change the heart, or proved inadequate to the work of leading on his people to victory and glory after he had enlisted them, then had he brought all the measures of his mercy into contempt, and angels would have refused to do him homage. But he was able to do all. He had but to lay down a life which none could take from him, and the price of our redemption was paid. He had but to speak the word, and the veriest rebel bowed to his mandate. And he has always with consummate skill led on the sacramental hosts of his elect to the abodes of paradise. Hence he is said to have "trodden the wine-press alone." He is represented as "traveling in the greatness of his strength," is said to "gird his sword upon his thigh," and to "ride forth conquering and to conquer."

Now, we needed just such a Redeemer--one who was "mighty to save." We were in a condition too forlorn to be redeemed by any other than an almighty Saviour. Hence when such a Saviour was offered, how could men do otherwise than kindly receive and joyfully embrace him? How could he fail to gain their confidence and love, and be the chosen Captain of their salvation, their Lord, and their King? "They will reverence my son."

6. This might have been presumed from his ability to *destroy* as well as to *save*. The Saviour comes, it is true, with an offer of mercy. But he comes, too, clothed with all the authority of

the Godhead. He will one day say, as in the parable, "These, mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me." The offers he makes to sinners they cannot with impunity reject. A blessing offered us by our fellowmen may be received or not, as we please; and if rejected there accrues no guilt. Not so the offer of mercy by Jesus Christ. He comes to demand our hearts as his throne; and will bless us if we receive him, but we are cursed if we reject him.

And the sinner, it would seem, must know that he is strong to destroy. He hurled the rebel angels from heaven and fastened them in chains under darkness till the judgment of the great day. He drowned a world when it would not have him to reign over it. And all his foes he has sent to a hopeless perdition as fast as they have evinced themselves incorrigibly wicked. Kind as are now his overtures, and extensive his promises, and prolonged his endurance, still, if you remain impenitent he must stain his raiment with your blood. His eyes will be as flames of fire, and out of his mouth will go a sharp sword to smite the ungodly, and on his vesture and on his thigh will be seen written "King of kings and Lord of lords." How tremendous the thought that the very Lord Jesus, at whose feet so many sinners have found pardon, will rise upon the finally incorrigible in all the greatness of his strength and "tread them in his anger, and trample them in his fury!" To such a Prince, how fair the presumption that every knee would bow and every tongue confess.

Finally, it might have been presumed that sinners would treat kindly the Lord Jesus *from their necessities*. He found them "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." He passed by and saw them as an infant "cast out into the open field" in the day that it was born. We had fallen under the curse of the broken law--had neither righteousness, nor holiness, nor happiness, nor hope. There was nothing for us but misery now, and "a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, that must devour the adversary." Thus, our necessities put us in need of a friend--an almighty friend--one that could pity and help the most miserable. Could it, then, have been presumed that should such a friend offer his aid, beings so lost and miserable could reject him! !

One could sooner conceive that a beggar would spurn the plenty and the pleasures of a palace and choose to lodge in the street, or that the blind would choose to grope their way to the grave when they might have vision, or that a dying man would refuse the touch that might give him life and health.

I close with three remarks.

1. The sinner's final ruin is *unnecessary*. All the purposes of his personal perdition may now be answered in the Saviour. The law can be honored, and God honored, and he escape damnation. All the purity of the precepts and all the attributes of the Godhead are displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ far more amply than in the volume of "smoke that ascends up forever and ever." O yes, the cross--that everlasting monument of a dying Saviour--reveals the Deity far more intelligibly than the "everlasting fire." Hence, the sinner is lost not because of any necessity for his ruin, not because of any doom that chained him down to death, not because his salvation was impossible, not because heaven could devise no other expedient for securing the divine veracity, not because of anything we can think of--but that he "chose darkness rather than light" and "death rather than life." Hence,

2. His ruin will be *self-induced*. By this I do not mean merely that he is a voluntary agent in

breaking the divine law. This sin always implies. I intend more than this. The sinner puts forth his hand and thrusts from him the charter of forgiveness. He might have had life after he was condemned, after his death-warrant was written and sealed, after the pit had been prepared to receive him. Nay, when hell itself was begun in his bosom and the divine anger was consuming him, even then eternal life was possible. But he "chose death!" Hence,

[3.] Finally, his ruin will be *wanton* [deliberate or willful]. He will be viewed forever as having sported with his soul, as if it had been a pearl and he had run with it to the mouth of a pit and cast it in, or as if it had been a combustible world and he with a torch had set it on fire. He employed himself in scattering firebrands, arrows, and death, and still professed himself to be in sport. The man who plunges the knife into his own heart does not more wantonly die than the sinner is wantonly damned. Oh, how affecting that hell should be thus peopled by a world of suicides--who dared the vengeance, and tantalized the compassion, and despised the forbearance of the Eternal! It might reasonably have been presumed, "*They will reverence my son.*" But no! Insulted Jehovah, they pour indignity upon his name and his cross, despise his messengers, and "perish in their sins" rather than do him homage and humbly seek redemption through his blood.

This is Sermon IV in Volume I of *Sermons*, 3 volumes, by Daniel A. Clark (New York: John S. Taylor, 1836). The text has not been modified, except that punctuation and KJV-era pronouns and verb forms have been modernized and long paragraphs have been divided.