

LLOYD-JONES

MESSENGER OF GRACE

BOOKS BY IAIN H. MURRAY

THE FORGOTTEN SPURGEON

THE PURITAN HOPE: REVIVAL AND THE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY

THE LIFE OF ARTHUR W. PINK

D. MARTYN LLOYD-JONES: THE FIRST FORTY YEARS

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A SCOTTISH CHRISTIAN HERITAGE

LLOYD-JONES

MESSENGER OF GRACE

. . . affectionate in look,
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.

WILLIAM COWPER: *THE TASK*

IAIN H. MURRAY



THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

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To
John Richard and Jane de Witt
With thankfulness for so much of our lives
shared through forty years.



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PART 1



THE LLOYD-JONES LEGACIES

C. H. Spurgeon, who died in 1892, said ‘I shall live and speak long after I am dead.’¹ While Martyn Lloyd-Jones did not use the words, he also bequeathed much to future generations. The legacies he left are real, and the way they differ from bequests of monetary value only make them the more important. Legacies of the latter kind only benefit those specifically named in a will; the spiritual legacies of the kingdom of God are inherited by a great many and in a different manner. The Lloyd-Jones legacies are today in the hands of millions whom he never knew, and they have spread spiritual wealth across the earth.

Before I turn to the legacies, the main facts of his life need to be summarized. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, or ML-J, as I shall frequently call him, was born in Cardiff, South Wales, on December 20, 1899 – seven years after the death of Spurgeon, and two days before that of D. L. Moody. He lived with his parents and two brothers in Wales until financial hardship drove them to London in 1914. There, at the beginning of World War I, he completed his education, and with such ability that by the age of twenty-

¹ ‘I beseech you’, he also said to students, ‘to live not only for this age but for the next also.’

one he had graduated in medicine at St Bartholomew's Hospital, which was probably the foremost teaching hospital in the world at that date. By that age he had already caught the attention of Sir Thomas Horder, the King's physician, who practised in London's famous Harley Street. When Lloyd-Jones became Horder's assistant in 1921 the way was open for a spectacular career in medicine. Sir James Paterson Ross, President of the Royal College of Surgeons, would later say that the young Welshman was 'one of the finest clinicians I ever encountered'. Then in 1926, to the astonishment of his friends, the successful physician announced that he was leaving medicine to become the preacher in Sandfields Mission Hall at Aberavon, Port Talbot, South Wales. MLJ remained there until 1938, when he agreed to assist Dr Campbell Morgan for a short period at Westminster Chapel, London. In fact he was to stay for thirty years, until 1968. After that date he continued to preach in many parts of the country until his eightieth year. He died on March 1, 1981.

LEGACY 1

AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT A CHRISTIAN MINISTER OUGHT TO BE

In the twentieth century there was a great change in the way the Christian ministry was regarded. In the year 1900, and earlier, the Christian minister in Britain was commonly regarded with respect; his word carried weight, and his church was well attended Sunday by Sunday. But the century that followed saw the status and influence of the ministry in striking decline. From a position of eminence the office became one of minor consequence and significance. Long before the end of the twentieth century the preacher was a popular subject for amusement in the entertainment media.

The Lloyd-Jones Legacies

Why did this alteration in the way the Christian ministry was viewed occur? It will not do to blame the change on social conditions, or on a failing public interest in Christianity itself. The explanation is rather within the church herself, for it was there that the biblical view of the ministry was first lost. Instead of a divine calling, it became another career: men did three years at university, perhaps three at a theological college, and then, in many instances, they went into churches, not to live and teach the Word of God, but to talk as men who had lost faith in Scripture. So the history of the Old Testament was repeated. It was to a worldly priesthood in the time of Samuel that God said, ‘Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed’ (*1 Sam.* 2:30). Again, in Malachi, God said to those who should have been his messengers, ‘The priests’ lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law . . . Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways’ (*Mal.* 2:7-9). Where the Word of God is despised judgments are sure to follow.

But when the true idea of the minister is lost, God has often restored it by calling individuals to the office in unlikely ways. Amos was called from being a farmer; John Knox from his post as a church lawyer; and Lloyd-Jones from the hospital and the consulting room. He had none of the credentials of a theological college training. His entrance into the ministry could scarcely have been more unlike what had become the accepted routine. As a training school for preachers of the Bible, St Bartholomew’s Hospital was about the last place imaginable. It was more a temple to scientific rationalism than to creation. Nothing he learned there could explain Lloyd-Jones’s message; or why, in 1927, he turned his back on Harley Street – the Mecca of medicine – for a

stipend of £225 a year, and a small house in a working-class district of South Wales. Plainly he had not gone to a mission hall for a more lucrative salary. There was no reason, unless it was that God does call men to preach.

To answer this call of God was not easy for ML-J. He loved medicine; he also loved his fiancée, Bethan Phillips, and in 1925 she doubted whether he should change direction in the manner he was considering. For a year-and-a-half he struggled with the decision. It became a burden that cost him both loss of sleep and weight. Yet his response to God's call was not with a spirit of self-sacrifice, but rather with the conviction that he was being given an immense privilege and responsibility. In later years, when his readiness to give up so much was praised, he rejected the suggestion with the words, 'I gave up nothing, I received everything. I count it the highest honour God can confer on any man to call him to be a herald of the gospel.'

If Lloyd-Jones differed in the manner of his calling to the gospel ministry, the contrast was no less between the current religious scene and his preaching. He spoke with certainty and authority. When he told his hearers that the soul was more important than the body, they knew he believed it. And those who came to know him in Aberavon were convicted by his life as well as his message. What he said was in harmony with what he was. There was nothing of self-importance about him. God had humbled him and shown him what an empty thing it is to live for the approval of men. The desire for fame and reputation that had once possessed him was mortified.

The result of this was that ML-J gave a new meaning to the Christian ministry. He never saw himself as a model for anyone, but his high view of the gospel ministry introduced that vision to many others. As one example of this I mention the life of Argos Zodiates. After ministering effectively in Katerini, Zodiates

The Lloyd-Jones Legacies

was driven by persecution to leave his native Greece for North America. En route through London, Zodiates and his wife were in Westminster Chapel on Sunday morning, October 21, 1957, when ML-J ‘happened’ to be preaching on Ephesians 4:11, ‘And he gave some apostles, some prophets; some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers.’ Such was his treatment of the pastoral office that the visitors determined at once to return to Katerini, convinced that God had spoken to them. They were still in Greece when visited by the preacher four years later.¹

When the executive committee of the Christian Medical Fellowship wrote to thank ML-J for what his ministry had meant to them, on his retirement from Westminster Chapel in 1968, they said: ‘We would like first to refer to your personal example, which has emphasised in so unique a manner the importance and dignity of the Christian ministry.’

LEGACY 2

THE TRUTH THAT CHRISTIANITY IS GOD-CENTRED RELIGION

God-centred Christianity does not mark churches in decline and it was rare in twentieth-century Britain. In the Welsh chapel life of ML-J’s own background, the pulpit ethos was mainly sentimental, moralistic, and anecdotal. It was worse in the many churches where liberal theology held sway; the message was akin to saying that a God of love exists for man’s comfort and happiness. Even in evangelical circles the message of the gospel was too often reduced to the forgiveness to be gained by responding to Jesus Christ.

¹ For his two sermons on these verses see D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: Ephesians 4:1–16* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1980), pp. 181–208.