# Contents

## Volume I

Preface, *by Sri Daya Mata* .................................  xiii
Introduction .................................................  xxx

1 Divine Incarnations: God's Emissaries ....................  1
2 Jesus' Immaculate Conception and His Relationship
   With John the Baptist ..................................  33
3 The Birth of Jesus and the Adoration of the
   Three Wise Men ........................................  51
4 The Infancy and Youth of Jesus ............................  63
5 The Unknown Years of Jesus' Life—Sojourn in India ...  79
6 The Baptism of Jesus .....................................  95
7 The Role of Satan in God's Creation ...................... 127
8 Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness ..................... 155
9 Jesus Meets His First Disciples .......................... 181
10 “Hereafter Ye Shall See Heaven Open”
   *Jesus' Discourse to Nathanael* ....................... 195
11 Water Into Wine: “This Beginning of Miracles....” .... 213
12 Driving the Money Changers Out of the Temple ....... 225
13 The Second Birth of Man—In Spirit
   *Dialogue With Nicodemus, Part I* ................. 237
14 The Ascension of Man—Lifting Up the Serpent
   in the Wilderness
   *Dialogue With Nicodemus, Part II* ............... 255
15 God's Love Gave to the World His Only Begotten Son
   *Dialogue With Nicodemus, Part III (Conclusion)* ... 271
16 Rejoicing in the Voice of the Bridegroom ............. 285
17 The Woman of Samaria, *Part I* ....................... 293
CONTENTS

18 Worship God “in Spirit and in Truth”
   *The Woman of Samaria, Part II* ................................. 303

19 “My Meat Is to Do the Will of Him That Sent Me”
   *The Woman of Samaria, Part III (Conclusion)* .......... 313

20 “Thy Son Liveth”: The Healing Power of Thought Transformation ................................. 329

21 “What Things the Father Doeth, These Also Doeth the Son Likewise”
   *Jesus’ Discourse on Judgment and Resurrection After the Healing at the Pool of Bethesda* ......................... 341

22 “Repent Ye, and Believe the Gospel” ......................... 371

23 Fishers of Men ......................................................... 381

24 Casting Out Devils ..................................................... 393

25 Healing the Sick ......................................................... 409

26 The Beatitudes
   *The Sermon on the Mount, Part I* ................................. 431

27 To Fulfill the Law
   *The Sermon on the Mount, Part II* ................................. 453

28 The Lord’s Prayer: Jesus Teaches His Followers How to Pray
   *The Sermon on the Mount, Part III* ................................. 485

29 “Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God, and His Righteousness”
   *The Sermon on the Mount, Part IV* ......................... 513

30 To Build the House of Life Upon the Rock of Wisdom
   *The Sermon on the Mount, Part V (Conclusion)* ......................... 531

31 Why Jesus Mixed With “Publicans and Sinners” ......................... 559

32 “The Sabbath Was Made for Man, and Not Man for the Sabbath” ................................. 573

33 Ordination of the Twelve Apostles and Sermon on the Plain 595

34 Jesus Cites His Wondrous Works in Testimony to John the Baptist and Extols John’s Greatness ................................. 615

35 The Forgiveness of Sins ..................................................... 643

36 What Is Blasphemy Against the Holy Ghost? ......................... 665
CONTENTS

37  “And He Spake Many Things Unto Them in Parables”
    Jesus’ Sermon About the Kingdom of Heaven  . . . . . . 685
38  “Thy Faith Hath Made Thee Whole”
    Storm, Disease, Devils, Death, Bow to the Will of Jesus  715
39  “A Prophet Hath No Honor in His Own Country” . . . 737
40  Jesus’ Counsel to Ministers of God’s Word, Part I  . . . 751
41  Jesus’ Counsel to Ministers of God’s Word, Part II  . . . 775

Volume II

42  Jesus Performs the Miracle of the Loaves and the Fishes,
    and Walks on the Sea of Galilee  . . . . . . . . . . . . . 807
43  The True “Bread of Life”  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 827
44  “The Signs of the Times”
    Jesus’ Works and Words in Testimony
    of His Special Dispensation  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 847
45  Peter’s Inspired Recognition of the Christ,
    and Jesus’ Transfiguration  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 873
46  “If Ye Have Faith, Nothing Shall Be Impossible Unto You”  891
47  “The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven”:
    Humble Servants of All  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 907
48  “If Thy Hand or Thy Foot Offend Thee, Cut Them Off”
    Jesus’ Counsel on Renunciation of Evil  . . . . . . . . . . 923
49  “Follow Me”: Further Counsel From Jesus on Inner
    and Outer Renunciation  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 941
50  “Never Man Spake Like This Man”
    Jesus Confounds His Critics in Jerusalem  . . . . . . . . 959
51  “I Am the Light of the World….Before Abraham Was,
    I Am”  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 977
52  “I Am the Door….I Am the Good Shepherd….I and My Father Are One”  999
53  Fulfilling the Two Greatest Commandments  . . . . . . . 1023
54  An Esoteric Perspective on The Lord’s Prayer  . . . . . . 1045
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Jesus Condemns Hypocrisy and Self-Serving Judgment in Religion and Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>God-realization: The Heavenly Treasure of Individuals and Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Will Few or the Many Find Salvation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Jesus’ Parables on Humility and Discipleship, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>“Ye Cannot Serve God and Mammon”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>“I Am the Resurrection and the Life”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>“The Kingdom of God Is Within You”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Jesus Speaks of Soul Union as the Original Purpose of Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Exchanging Temporal Wealth for the Riches of God’s Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Jesus Teaches in the Temple at Jerusalem for the Last Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>“The Hour Is Come, That the Son of Man Should Be Glorified”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Did Jesus Prophesy His Second Coming and the End of the World?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>What Jesus Meant by “Everlasting Punishment”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>“This Do in Remembrance of Me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>“Love One Another as I Have Loved You”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>“Abide in Me…Continue Ye in My Love”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1061
1079
1101
1119
1139
1155
1173
1193
1219
1249
1263
1283
1295
1325
1337
1359
1389
CONTENTS

72  “Father, I Have Finished the Work Which Thou Gavest
    Me to Do”
    The Last Supper, Part IV (Conclusion) ...................... 1419
73  Jesus’ Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His Arrest 1435
74  The Crucifixion ................................................. 1461
75  “Lo, I Am With You Always”
    The Resurrection of Jesus, and His Ever-Living Presence 1493

Addenda

Inspirational Readings for the True Worship of Christ ...... 1527
    Part I, Christmas
    Part II, Easter

About the Author ..................................................... 1566

Aims and Ideals of Self-Realization Fellowship .............. 1570

Self-Realization Fellowship Publications and Lessons ...... 1571

Glossary ............................................................... 1577

Map of Palestine in New Testament Times ..................... 1597

Index of Gospel Verses in Commentary ......................... 1599

Index of Other Bible Verses Cited .............................. 1602

Index of Bhagavad Gita Verses Cited ........................... 1605

General Index ......................................................... 1607
DISCOURSE 1

Divine Incarnations:
God’s Emissaries

The Mission of Divine Love That Jesus Came to Fulfill

The Nature of an Avatar’s Consciousness

The One Spirit: Source of All Creation

True Meaning of the Holy Trinity

The Cosmic Word or Holy Ghost:
Intelligent Creative Vibration of Aum

“Only Begotten Son” Refers Not to Jesus’ Body,
but to His Christ Consciousness

How the Darkness of Delusion Blinds Man
to the Light of God’s Presence in Creation

All Souls Are Children of God, Made in His Image

“The opening verses of Saint John’s Gospel may rightly be called Genesis According to Saint John…. [They] should be considered first when the true meaning of the life and teachings of Jesus is being sought.”
Come to Me, O Christ, as the Good Shepherd

O Christ, beloved Son of God! thou didst embark on a storm-tossed sea of prejudiced minds. Their cruel thought waves lashed thy tender heart.

Thy trial on the Cross was an immortal victory of humility over force, of soul over flesh. May thine ineffable example hearten us to bear bravely our lesser crosses.

O Great Lover of Error-Torn Humanity! In myriad hearts an unseen monument has arisen to the mightiest miracle of love—thy words: “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Mayest thou remove from our eyes the cataracts of ignorance, that we see the beauty of thy message: “Love even thine enemies as thyself. Sick in mind or asleep in delusion, they are still thy brothers.”

O Cosmic Christ, may we, too, conquer the Satan of dividing selfishness that prevents the gathering in sweet accord of all men in the one fold of Spirit.

As thou art Perfection, yet wert crucified, teach us not to resent the inevitable tests of life: the daily challenge to our fortitude by adversities, our self-control by temptation, and our goodwill by misunderstanding.

Purified by contemplation on thee, innumerable devotees perfume their lives with emanations from thy flower soul. O Good Shepherd! thou leadest thy countless flock to the evergreen Pastures of Peace.

Our deepest aspiration is to see the Heavenly Father with open eyes of wisdom, as thou dost; and to know like thee that we are verily His sons. Amen.*

* From Paramahansa Yogananda’s Whispers from Eternity (published by Self-Realization Fellowship).
With these words, Jesus placed his signature on a unique life that enthroned him everlastingly on the altar of worshipful hearts as the incarnation of God’s loving compassion. The Good Shepherd of souls opened his arms to all, rejecting none, and with universal love coaxed the world to follow him on the path to liberation through the example of his spirit of sacrifice, renunciation, forgiveness, love for friend and enemy alike, and supreme love for God above all else. As the tiny babe in the manger at Bethlehem, and as the savior who healed the sick and raised the dead and applied the salve of love on the wounds of errors, the Christ in Jesus lived among men as one of them that they too might learn to live like gods.

For mere mortals to cope with a life of unsolved and unsolvable mysteries in an inscrutable universe created by the omnipotence of God, of the omniscient essence of His omnipresence, would indeed be an overwhelming challenge were it not for divine emissaries who come on earth to speak with the voice and authority of God for the guidance of man.

Aeons past, in ancient higher ages in India, rishis enunciated the manifestation of Divine Beneficence, of “God with us,” in terms of divine incarnations, avatars—God incarnate on earth in enlightened beings. The eternal, omnipresent, unchanging Spirit has neither a corporeal nor heavenly form called God. Nor as the Lord God Creator
does He fashion a form in which He then deigns to dwell among His creatures. Rather, He makes Himself known through the divinity in worthy instruments. Many are the voices that have intermediated between God and man, *khanda avatars*, or partial incarnations in God-knowing souls. Less common are the *purna avatars*, liberated beings who are fully one with God; their return to earth is to fulfill a God-ordained mission. The Lord in the sacred Hindu Bible, the Bhagavad Gita, declares: “Whenever virtue declines and vice predominates, I incarnate as an Avatar. In visible form I appear from age to age to protect the virtuous and to destroy evildoing in order to reestablish righteousness” (11:7–8). The same one glorious infinite consciousness of God, the Universal Christ Consciousness, *Kutastha Chaitanya*, becomes familiarly apparelled in the individuality of an enlightened soul, graced with a distinguishing personality and godly nature appropriate to the times and purpose of the incarnation.

Without this intercession of God’s love come to earth in the example, message, and guiding hand of His avatars, it would scarce be possible for groping humanity to find the path into God’s kingdom midst the dark miasma of world delusion, the cosmic substance of human habitation. Lest His benighted children be lost forever in creation’s delusive labyrinths, the Lord comes again and again in God-illumined prophets to light the way. The glory of Christ in the form of Jesus made visible the Invisible Light that leads to God.

Because the periodic recurrence of divine incarnations is a part of God’s creative enterprise, signs of such a birth are imprinted in the Grand Master Plan. Sages, through their awakened soul intuition, can read the heavenly inscriptions; and if it be in accord with God’s will that such a future event be made known, they prophesy in plain or veiled revelations. This is one of the many ways in which God assures His children of His awareness of their need for His presence amongst them. Of the future coming of Lord Jesus, several references in the Old Testament are cited by devout Christians and Biblical scholars. From the book of prophet Isaiah:

> “The Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel” * (7:14).

* “Which being interpreted is, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23).

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**DISCOURSE 1**

*The mission of divine love that Jesus came to fulfill*
My servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high....So shall he sprinkle many nations (52:13, 15).

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all....He was taken from prison and from judgment...he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was he stricken....He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (53:6, 8, 12).

Divine intercession to mitigate the cosmic law of cause and effect, by which a man suffers from his errors, was at the heart of the mission of love Jesus came to fulfill. Moses brought the law from God to man, emphasizing the awful justice that befalls willful heedlessness. Jesus came to demonstrate the forgiveness and compassion of God, whose love is a shelter even from exacting law. Similarly, Jesus was preceded by Gautama Buddha, the “Enlightened One,” whose incarnation reminded a forgetful generation of the Dharma Chakra, the ever-rotating wheel of karma—self-initiated action and its effects which make each man, and not a Cosmic Dictator, responsible for his own present condition. Buddha brought heart back into the arid theology and mechanical rituals into which the ancient Vedic religion of India had fallen after the passing of a higher age in which Bhagavan Krishna, India’s most beloved of avatars, preached the way of divine love and God-realization through the practice of the supreme spiritual science of yoga, union with God.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* Such was the exceptional mission shouldered by Jesus. Intercession by intimates of God is the palliative elixir that gives a weakened mortal the necessary strength to rise and conquer the forces of cosmic law he has roused against himself by disobedient behavior. The interceder stands with the devotee, offering him defense in the form of impermeable wisdom, and sometimes deflecting onto himself a portion of a devastating onslaught.

Jesus came in a darkened age that was little able to appreciate him; but his message of the love of God and his intercession on behalf of suffering humanity was not only for that time but for all ages to come—that God is with man in his darkest moments as well as in enlightened times. He reminded a world fearful of their Creator as a God

* John 15:13 (see Discourse 71).