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Living Water

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FOUR JOURNEYS OF THE LORD JESUS

“For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman’s form, taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father’s glory.” (Philippians 2:5-11)

I have been told that there is a church in west London where there is a little plaque put up in the front of the pulpit which reads something like this: “Preach as though you will never preach again—as a dying man to dying men”. Evidently, the object of that was to remind every preacher that his duty was to tell people about Jesus and that they might never have another opportunity.

Now, no preacher ever knows whether he will have another opportunity to preach or whether everyone in his audience will have an opportunity to hear the preaching again. What we do know is that we have the opportunity here and now and therefore it is incumbent upon us to make the most of it.

I want to speak to you this evening about four journeys of Jesus. When a person goes on a journey it is obvious that the object of the journey is to get from one place to another. There are four journeys that we read about in the Bible, journeys of Jesus. The scripture we have read tells us about them: “Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God;” (that is where the journey started) “but emptied himself, taking a bondman’s form, taking his place in the likeness of men”. That is the first journey, from the height of Godhead to the likeness of men.

The second journey is this, “and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself,” (that is where this journey started) “becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross”. That was the objective of the journey—this particular journey ended in death on the cross.

Then we have: “Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name”. That is the third journey I want to speak about. The starting point of this journey was the grave: the object, the end of the journey, was glory at God’s right hand.

The fourth journey precedes what is spoken of in verses 10 and 11, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal

beings, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory". The fourth journey has not yet begun; it starts in heaven and the Lord comes down again to this earth where He is going to reign for a thousand years and where the One who was once rejected when He made His first journey will this time be acclaimed and received and honoured.

I want to speak, quite briefly, about those four journeys of Jesus.

Now the first journey, as we have read, started in heavenly glory. Jesus was, "subsisting in the form of God". The One we know as Jesus, that lowly Man who came to this earth, was God. As the Bible tells us elsewhere, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us"; that One was in the form of God. And He "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God" because He was already on an equality with God—He was God Himself. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". That was the starting point of the first journey I am speaking about. He was God and He came down to this earth. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). As it expresses it here, He "emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men".

Now, have you ever stopped—I am sure that most of you have at some time or another, but it is my duty as a preacher to make sure that you know and understand—have you ever stopped to ask yourself why Jesus came?

At Christmas-time most people are occupied with the coming into this world of Jesus as a baby. Well, it is good that they should be, but the problem is that most of them regard it more or less as a fable or as a fairy tale. Actually, it is a real fact. The first of the journeys that I am speaking about started in heavenly glory. Jesus was, and He still is, in the form of God. He was in heaven, God Himself, with God, and He came down into this world. Now why? He came down into this world because man was in a hopeless condition and state. We might say, putting it simply, without being irreverent, God had tried every possible means to see if man could be taken out of his state of sinfulness and degradation. Man had proved, in every case, that he was unable to come out of his terrible state of need and ruin.

God sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. What a wonderful thing! That is why He came, to be the Saviour of the world.

"This is a faithful saying", we read "and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners", and Paul, the writer of that remarkable and memorable statement, adds "of whom I am the chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). Paul took the last place in most things. He says, "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called apostle," (1 Corinthians 15:9) and "To me,

less than the least of all saints” (Ephesians 3:8). When he comes to talk about sinners, he says, ‘I am the first. I am the chief of those, I am the worst of the lot’.

Now, it is a good thing when each of us comes to the realisation that we need a Saviour. When a person realises he is in need of help he will be very, very glad to look for someone who can give that help. So you must recognise that you are a sinner: that means to say, that you are doing your own will rather than doing God’s will. That is the simplest way of defining a sinner, one who does his own will instead of God’s will. We all know the story, how it all began. The devil, the serpent—we know it was the devil because it says so in the Revelation, “he laid hold of the dragon, the ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan” (Revelation 20:2). The devil came to the first man and his wife in the guise of a serpent and persuaded them that God was being an unreasonable taskmaster and they would do better not to obey but to go their own way, which they did. And that is how sin came into the world. “By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death” (Romans 5:12).

We all know that unless the Lord comes for us we will die. This life does not go on forever and really, when you stop to think about it, if you are a believer in Jesus, you must be very glad that it does not. This life is one which is surrounded by and full of sin, hatred, violence. I do not mean to say necessarily that all these things mark you but the world we are living in is full of murder, violence, hatred, and crime of all kinds.

That is not God’s idea of how His creatures should be living. He wanted them to live in a place like the Garden of Eden, full of delights, where every thing was in their favour. But “sin entered into the world, and by sin death”. Now, there is only one way that could be put right and that was by God sending His Son, His only Son, who was Himself in the form of God. He had to go into death in order to save mankind. That is exactly what Jesus did. The first journey I am speaking about was when God Himself came down into this world, “taking a bondman’s form, taking his place in the likeness of men”.

Now, the second journey was when Jesus, being in this world in a bondman’s form, went Himself into death. You say, ‘What a journey!’ Why did Jesus go into death? There was no sin in Jesus yet He went into death for this was the only way that mankind could be delivered. If man was to be redeemed, that is to say, brought back to God out of the clutches of the devil, it was necessary that the blood of Jesus should be shed. That blood was far more valuable than that of the bulls and goats that were sacrificed year by year in the Old Testament times. “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

In God's wonderful mercy, He has so arranged it now, through the death and the blood shedding of our Lord Jesus Christ, that even if you deliberately go against Him, you can still be saved. God is prepared to forgive the worst sinner.

The malefactor crucified alongside Jesus had nothing to offer in his own favour. He relied entirely upon unmerited grace to take advantage of the Saviour's wonderful love in dying for him. So he says, "Remember me, Lord, when thou comest in thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42). He had already said to his fellow malefactor, on the other side of Jesus, "Dost thou too not fear God, thou that art under the same judgment? and we indeed justly, for we receive the just recompense of what we have done; but this man has done nothing amiss". He recognised that he was a sinner and was about to die because he was a sinner. But he knew that the Lord Jesus Christ was going to come in His kingdom and he wants the Lord Jesus to recognise him when that glorious day comes. That shows pretty good faith for somebody who had only just turned to the Lord from a life marked by violence and probably murder. We know of Barabbas that he "had committed murder in the insurrection" (Mark 15:7) and possibly these two were not much different.

Well, Jesus was "obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". Now that was not an ordinary death. I suppose most people die from what is called natural causes. Some may be killed in an accident, but very few are executed for being criminals. But in the days of the Roman empire execution for a crime was quite a common thing. But the Lord Jesus Christ had done no sin. There was no sin in Him. But He went into death, and that the death of the cross. That was a shameful death. If you had seen, a couple of hundred years ago, a man on his way to be hanged you would have known that he was a bad man. The Lord Jesus went that very way, the way that bad, wicked men go, in order that He might redeem us to God by His blood. That was the second journey that Jesus took.

The third journey started in the grave and ended in the glory. God raised Jesus from among the dead. God was not going to leave His beloved Son, the sinless, spotless One, in the grave! The Lord Jesus had endured God's judgment against sin whilst He was on the cross and God raised Him from among the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand in glory (Ephesians 1:20). What a just response from God to the perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the third journey: God took Him from the grave, raised Him from the dead and He was seen for forty days by those who loved Him.

There were plenty of witnesses of His resurrection. On one occasion He appeared to more than five hundred brethren (1 Corinthians 15:6). By the time that was

written some of those brethren had already fallen asleep and all have fallen asleep long ago now. Yet they were witnesses of His resurrection.

Not only was He raised to live on this earth again for forty days, but He was taken up to glory. He was received up into heaven. We are told that, “a cloud received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). Jesus came from the Father and went back to the Father. He went back where He properly belonged. He is there now.

Some of us were speaking earlier today about the time when Moses went up the mountain. He was gone forty days and the people down below got tired of waiting for him to come back, to come down from the mountain. They said to Aaron, “this Moses, the man that has brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what is become of him!” (Exodus 32:23). ‘We do not know why he is so long coming down; let us make another god.’ So they set to work and produced another! Well, that just shows the wickedness in man’s heart, that cannot be cured. Only the death of Jesus can put away sin by His sacrifice (Hebrews 9:26).

So God has raised Him to His own right hand in glory. When He came to earth the first time He went about doing good; then He went into death and His blood was shed in order to put away sin by His sacrifice. Now at the end of His third journey He was at God’s right hand in heaven. What has He done there? He has sent His Holy Spirit that He might make His dwelling in those who love and believe on our Lord Jesus Christ. I sometimes try to express it this way: christianity without the Holy Spirit would be a glorious impossibility! To belong to the Lord Jesus Christ here is one of the greatest privileges anyone could have but without the Holy Spirit you could not keep it up for a day! Even with the help of the Holy Spirit many of us sadly fail day by day. Without the Spirit we could not even begin to lead a christian life. So the Lord Jesus, from the glory, has sent down the Holy Spirit to empower those who are down here in witnessing for Him.

Now I will speak very briefly of the fourth journey. The fourth journey has some similarities to the first one. It is the same route, you might say. He starts from heavenly glory and ends on this earth. He is not coming next time as a babe in a manger at Bethlehem. He is coming in power and glory to set up His kingdom here and to rule and to reign so that the whole earth gets the good and blessing of Jesus as its Head and Saviour. That is the biggest blessing that could possibly be given to anyone, to have Jesus in the top place as Head over everything. That is the way for the christian, the believer, to be happy and blessed today—to give Christ the first place in our lives and in our thoughts. That is the way, too, for a christian company to be blessed—to let Christ have the first place in all their arrangements and in their meetings.

When the fourth journey is taken, Jesus will come to this earth again in glory and splendour and will put down all the enemies so that all these people that are responsible for the violence, corruption, murder, hatred, burglaries and all the rest of it, will all be disposed of. You may say, 'That sounds a bit harsh'. Well, is it not a good thing to get everything evil out the way so that God's people can enjoy uninterrupted and undisturbed blessing? That is just what Jesus will do. It is what He does in the hearts of those who believe Him now. He will do the same on earth when all the inhabitants of the earth are prepared to submit to Him. He will bring in wonderful blessing. That is the fourth journey. This wonderful Person, Jesus, that we speak about, is going to come again and reign and be received where He was once rejected. The One who was rejected and cast out when He came to do nothing but good is going to come back and do the good again without being rejected and cast out. He will be received, not only by Israel, but by the nations as well, and will rule in righteousness. "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isaiah 32:1). He is going to come and bring blessing to the whole world.

The great thing now, for each one of us, is to recognise that we are sinners, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, believe on the God who raised Him from among the dead, confess His name, and know what real salvation is. May each one of us be brought into salvation and kept in it day by day, for a witness to Him.

Dr A. W. Michael Rooke

A Preaching of the Gospel—2nd April 2000, Sevenoaks.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD — 1

Zophar, who claimed to know God but did not

“Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as the heights of heaven; what wilt thou do? deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know?” (Job 11:7-8)

The book of Job in the Bible is a long book and parts of it do not seem very encouraging but it is in scripture for a purpose. One particular thing it deals with is why anyone's history turns out the way it does: why some people have such difficult lives and why things happen to them that they do not seem to deserve.

The book of Job speaks of several different persons. It speaks a great deal about God and it speaks, too, about Satan. Then it speaks about Job and about his wife, and it speaks about three men who came to comfort him in his distress. Then it speaks about another man that joined in. Elihu heard what they were saying and he was ready to burst because what the others said was so hopeless. There is some truth in what they say but, sadly, it is not the whole truth.

Zophar the Naamathite was the third of these friends to speak. He took a very severe line with Job and he laid some claim to a knowledge of God for himself. He said, "But oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee". That shows he did not know God very well. He is looking for God to speak against someone. Then he says, what we read, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" He does not think that Job can come to any knowledge of God for himself. For a man like Zophar, it was a hopeless search. Yet if we had Job and his friends here we could say to Zophar that the Bible tells us now that, "God ... is a rewarder of them who seek him out" (Hebrews 11:6).

So, the question is a right one. But Zophar had not got an answer. That is the sad thing about Job's three friends. They had a lot of questions and criticisms but they had no answers. So God, at the end of the book, tells them plainly that they had not spoken rightly about Him. What they thought they knew of God made them hard, and critical, and demanding. These are not marks of those that know God. And Job for all his faults, and they were real, came forth at the end with a knowledge of God and was used of God to pray for his three friends, which might well have been a test to his spirit.

We begin to learn something about God in this book and about His ways with Job. We learn that God looks for the spirits of those that have to do with Him to be softened and softened to the point that they can take up the cause, before God, of those to whom they really owe no goodwill at all. That is the working of grace.

David Burr

Part 1 of an address at Croydon, July 2000

In the next issue DV: "Hagar, who heard God's word but was not profited by it"

THE COMING KING

Thou art coming, mighty Saviour!
“King of kings”, Thy written name!
Thou art coming, royal Saviour!
Coming for Thy promised reign.
Oh, the joy when sin’s confusion
Ends beneath Thy righteous sway;
Oh, the peace when all delusion
At Thy presence dies away.

Thou art coming, loving Saviour!
Coming first to claim Thine own.
Thou art coming, faithful Saviour!
Thou wouldst not abide alone.
In Thy Father’s house in glory
Sinners saved shall dwell with Thee;
Oh, the sweetness of the story!
Love’s own record we shall be.

Once Thy coming, holy Saviour,
Brought Thee to the sinner’s place!
Wondrous coming — lowly Saviour,
Wonderful Thy love and grace!
Thine the wisdom in the manger,
Thine the power upon the cross;
Thine the glory — as the stranger;
Riches — though in utter loss!

Thou art coming, crownèd Saviour!
Not “the second time” for sin;
Thou art coming, thronèd Saviour,
Bringing all the glory in.
All Thy Father’s house, its glory,
Hangs, by sure behest, on Thee:
Oh, the sweetness of the story!
Saviour, come; we wait for Thee!

Hannah K Burlingham

SOWING THE SEED

Go forth and sow, O sowers
'Tis precious seed ye bear!
Where lie the plough's deep furrows,
Scatter it in with care.
Sow broadcast by the wayside,
Some among the thorns may fall,
Some in God's fenced gardens,
He keepeth watch o'er all.

(Revelation 22:17)
(Psalm 126:6)
(Amos 6:12)
(Isaiah 28:23-29)
(Luke 14:22-23)
(Mark 4:17-19)
(Luke 8:8,15)
(Isaiah 55:10,11)

Blessed if "by all waters",
Ye have the heart to sow;
See! oxen "strong to labour",
Forth to this service go:
Though patient toil is needed,
None can too lowly be,
Too much despised, O Master,
To do Thy work for Thee.

(Isaiah 32:20)
(Matthew 9:29)
(Psalm 144:14)
(2 Timothy 4:1-5)
(Romans 2:7)
(2 Corinthians 4:7)
(1 Corinthians 1:27-29)
(Jeremiah 1:7)

O sowers be not weary,
The Lord hath need of you;
Keep ever 'mid your labour
The harvest day in view;
The Lord will guide your footsteps,
He'll teach you where to go,
Ye shall return with singing,
Who erst in tears did sow.

(Galatians 6:9)
(Matthew 21:2,3)
(Hebrews 12:1-2)
(1 Corinthians 3:8)
(Isaiah 30:21,23)
(Psalm 32:8-9)
(Psalm 126:5)
(Hebrews 6:11-12)

Whence the wind comes up ye know not,
Nor whither it may blow,
Watch not the clouds above you,
Your part is but to sow.
God freely gives His sunshine,
He sends His rain and showers;
Sow the small seed, have patience,
And He will bring the flowers.

(John 3:8)
(Psalm 147:18)
(Ecclesiastes 11:4)
(Proverbs 11:24)
(Matthew 5:45)
(Job 27:6,11,14)
(James 5:7)
(1 Corinthians 15:36.38)

Morn is the time of sowing,
Toward night is not too late;
No labourer, willing-hearted,
Need linger at the gate.
Go forth, go forth O sowers!
'Tis precious seed ye bear;
Go! at your Master's bidding,
The "field" is everywhere.

(Ecclesiastes 11:6)
(Romans 13:11-12)
(1 Chronicles 29:5,17)
(Matthew 20:6-7)
(Luke 10:12)
(Romans 10:15)
(Mark 16:15)
(Matthew 13:38)

Hannah K Burlingham

A SONG FOR THE "FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK"

Thy love, blest Lord, in death made known,
Has touched our hearts anew;
Responsive love delights to own,
All praise to Thee is due.

The loaf declares us to be one,
One body there is seen;
The Spirit's unity we own,
Where diverse we had been.

"The cup of blessing which we bless",
Speaks loud of love divine;
Love flowing out in righteousness,
Where God's bright glories shine.

While thus we call Thee, Lord, to mind
Thou dost in Spirit come,
With us Thy brethren here to find
Thy love's attractive home.

The Father's name Thou hast declared,
His love is there well known;
While with Thee, all that love is shared,
Thyself, Thy brethren, one.

There Thy blest voice delights to raise,
In tones of deepest joy,
The hymn of holy, heavenly praise,
In bliss without alloy.

Joseph Pellatt

COMING TO JESUS

I was brought up with my two sisters by my mum, who is a practising Roman Catholic, and my Dad, who calls himself a Protestant (although he never went to church). Dad worked hard to provide for us materially, but he smoked heavily and drank a lot and was very violent when drunk. It was not what I would call a happy childhood but I did come through it relatively unscathed.

When I was twenty I married my first real boyfriend but unfortunately the marriage lasted only five years. With hindsight I know that I only married to escape from my dad and I soon realised that there was something missing and my marriage failure was totally my fault. I needed Jesus but I did not realise it then. Before the ink was dry on my divorce papers I had met my present husband, David, who is a lovely man and we now have two beautiful boys, Jack and Ben.

Four and a half years ago, shortly after Jack was born, a woman from the Jehovah's Witness called at our house. I took the magazines but I did not read them and for six months I managed to avoid her, but eventually she caught me in, and after a bit of persuasion I agreed to start a home Bible study course. For the next three and a half years I spent one hour a week working through her course. This effectively demolished any doubts I had about the integrity of the Bible (unfortunately I was studying the Witnesses' version) and brought me to an intellectual acceptance of the need to change my life. This was an impossible struggle and I now know that only God can change us. At the same time I was under pressure to attend Jehovah's Witness meetings and for some time I made excuses for not going.

In November 1999 a very strange thing happened to me. I became obsessed with an actor. It was like a teenage crush and endless daydreams about this person filled my head. I bought a video of one of his programmes and secretly played portions of it over and over again. Along with this was a desire to dress fashionably and to want the latest in clothes, perfumes and shoes. The most scary thing was that I became very short tempered with the boys, having tantrums myself. One day, when I saw the fear in their faces, it reminded me of how I had felt about my dad. Early in January 2000 I concluded that I must get these silly fantasies out of my head and that the only way I could do this was to pray. I did not find this easy at first, but I persevered and I also started reading the Bible.

The image of God portrayed by the Jehovah's Witnesses is of an awesome all-powerful being far beyond the universe and it all seemed too remote for me, but one night, feeling hopelessly inadequate, I prayed to Jehovah to help me to understand. Immediately (and I do not know whether it was a vision or a dream — it was certainly much more than just a feeling) I felt that Jesus was holding His arms out to me and holding me tight to Himself. It was like a hug from the best friend I had ever had!

This experience did not fit into the Jehovah's Witness teaching and with their 'help' I turned away from it. Nevertheless it moved my spiritual desire up a gear and I started re-studying the Witnesses' teaching. Despite this I retained an uneasiness about it, but assumed that this was because I did not yet understand it properly. They emphasised that the end of the age was imminent (certainly within the next fifteen years) and this scared me and spurred me on and I started going to their meetings.

My first attendance at one of their meetings upset my mum and my sister very, very much. My sister downloaded from the internet a lot of information about the Jehovah's Witnesses, exposing the falseness of all that I had been taught. Sadly, their opposition only made me dig my heels in and when my sister physically tried to stop me going again, this convinced me that I was right.

I went to that meeting in tears, but was welcomed by the Witnesses and told that they too experienced opposition. That meeting was not however the spiritual experience that I had hoped for. When I arrived home my husband had been reading the internet information and he told me how frightened he was. This made me stop and think. This was seriously going to affect our marriage. David had actually thought of leaving and it was only the thought of the children which had stopped him from doing so. I could not bear the thought that he had been so upset. After a long talk and many tears I agreed to back off from the Jehovah's

Witnesses. I thought that if my family saw that I was just as committed in say, six months or a years time, then they would give in.

Everyone was very relieved, but I felt bereft, empty, and alone! I hardly slept that night but I prayed a lot and in the morning I felt calmer but not better. That morning I thought of a christian that I used to work with. I telephoned him and arranged to meet him that evening. I felt that I could not be persuaded from my Jehovah's Witness beliefs but I thought that David would be reassured by my contact with a christian.

With that decision made, I had a growing sense of peace and by the evening, when I visited my christian friend, I was beginning to think that giving up the Witnesses was the right thing to do. In our conversation that evening everything became clear as my friend gave an explanation of the true Scriptures as compared to the Jehovah's Witness bible. The Lord had used my husband's distress to start off this process and journey to the Lord but I also recognise that it was the Holy Spirit who was the true author of my unease when I was following a wrong path and who in the space of two days had changed my life and given me such real peace and joy.

I was baptised on 5th August 2000 and on that occasion I said that the one thing that surprised me was not my love for Jesus but the realisation of how much He loved me. The more the Holy Spirit teaches me, the more aware I become of what Jesus did for me on the cross. He died such a death, alone, mocked and in great physical and spiritual anguish, so that I would not have to face death as a lost sinner. Such is the amazing love of Jesus, that in that one act He took away my sins for ever and gave me the assurance of my place in heaven and to know that whatever may happen in this life, I have a bright hope and eternal future to look forward to. With so much love poured for me, how can I not give something back in praise to God, and in this life show something of that love to those around me?

What Jesus has done and is doing for me, is very humbling, but that is the true place for me, as He leads me in the journey of life to know Him, my Lord and Saviour, better and better.

In conclusion can I ask you to pray for my husband, David, that he too might be saved and also for the Jehovah's Witnesses that they might come to the true Light, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Teresa.

FOLLOWERS OF JESUS

Following in Affection

John 1:35-41

The two followers of Jesus of whom we read in John 1 were men who had already been attracted by “a man sent from God whose name was John”, truly one of God’s prophets; indeed, the Lord Himself said that “there is not a greater prophet than John the baptist.”

John was a great man, and impressive, so that multitudes came to him and under his influence many were baptised, confessing their sins and a great spiritual movement had taken place. No doubt John the baptist, a man only thirty years of age, with a distinctive message from God, marked by devotedness and energy, was himself exceedingly attractive. These two men that we read of had come under his influence; they had followed him and had become his disciples. Was that the end of the matter? Indeed it was not!

It may be that there are many who have been attracted by the servants of God, helped and impressed by them, and who have followed them, being glad of the spiritual help they have received, but the work of God has not this objective in view. The one who has been the most help to us is not intended to become our object. No, the Lord would Himself become everything to our hearts. So there comes a test, as every true believer is tested, and it does not harm any of us. The question arises: ‘Are you prepared to go forward? Have you reached your real objective?’

As they were in the company of John the baptist, whom up to that moment they had been following, there came before their vision the Son of God, and they listened to John breathing the very language of his heart, entranced by the glory of this Person. John’s drawing attention to Christ was but a short word: “Behold the Lamb of God!” Here is a man who in the power of the Holy Spirit speaks five words with the understanding, with the result that his two disciples left John and followed Jesus. They were following in affection.

We know the history so well; but we must dwell on it for a moment, because it is the beginning of this great spiritual development which is to reach a point in our history when Christ fills the vision of our souls. The appreciation of Jesus as the Lamb of God is essential to us if we are to follow this path. We must tread it from the beginning; so these two disciples began their real spiritual history as followers of Jesus, by coming under His influence as the Lamb of God.

“Behold the Lamb of God!” they heard John say. How attractive that would be! Think of the thousands of lambs slain during the past dispensation, all pointing on to this Lamb! It is as though, in the power of the Holy Spirit of God, those five words gathered up the whole of the Old Testament, and centred all the light of its types and figures on the glorious Person of Jesus! These two disciples saw the Person who was Himself the Lamb of God! How often they must have eaten the passover lamb and looked back to the experience of their forefathers in Egypt! They understood little of the import of it but now they see the Lamb of God “as he walked”.

What attractiveness there was about Jesus! Every step He took was filling heaven with delight! And John the baptist, coming under the influence of Christ and by the glory of His Person, exclaimed out of the fulness of his heart: “Behold the Lamb of God”. That influence was so powerful that it transformed the whole life of those two disciples: they followed Jesus! It meant leaving John, and going beyond him. It has to be so; often those who are used to the blessing of souls see them going further and following Jesus, and they rejoice in it.

Now these two disciples meet another test: the Lord Himself challenges them. It is a very interesting moment. Perhaps a christian meeting is an occasion for the Lord to challenge our hearts. In the rush of life, the pressure of business, and of home life, it is so easy to get distracted; but in the quietude of such an hour, with nothing to occupy us save the immediate matter before us, the Lord Himself would take the opportunity to say, “What seek ye?” Let every heart be prepared for the challenge!

The Lord knows whether we are wholehearted. It is very serious to be half-hearted. ‘Oh, he is a believer!’ they say, but is he wholeheartedly following in the path? Is he going after Christ? If not, what will happen? Spiritual shipwreck. Persons cannot be held by mere outward belief. They may assent to the truth; they may even have a living faith in the Saviour but that in itself will not hold them; it must be Him that they are following if they are to be held.

Dear christian friend, is there anything standing between you and this whole-hearted committal to Christ? Is there any object claiming your attention that would divert you from the path of true discipleship? If so, may the Lord attract you by the glory of His Person so that you can let nothing stand in the way of devotedly following Him!

Those who are half-hearted retard progress, cause difficulties, present other objects, stumble in the path, and alas! often turn out of it to the discouragement

of others. Those who are committed to the path experience the grace of Christ upholding them and the power of the Holy Spirit with them.

These two disciples had to be challenged: “What seek ye?” Is it a matter of curiosity, or some personal gain, some ulterior motive? Let our hearts be challenged in the presence of Christ. “What seek ye?” That is a very searching word! Their answer is, “Master, where dwellest thou?” They employed the choicest title they knew. They are now wholeheartedly under the influence of Christ. Wherever He leads them they will go. They have Christ before them: that is the secret. He says, “Come and see”. The Lord will always encourage those seeking Him. Never has there been a seeker who sought Him in vain when he has sought Him with all his heart.

F. S. Marsh

In the next issue DV: “Following with the Flock”

CHRISTIAN HABITS

The habit of meditation

The habit of meditation is easily neglected. Modern days are so full of bustle and business that we do not acquire and continue in this habit and there is a danger of our becoming shallow and superficial in our knowledge of God. If I could encourage anyone to spend more time in meditation, I should feel my words had not been in vain.

In Psalm 119 the Psalmist says that he will meditate on God’s precepts, on His statutes, on His law and on His testimonies. He tells us he meditates on them or he gives himself over to the meditation of them. Various expressions are used. In verse 148 he says he anticipates “the night watches”, and in another, that he meditates on His law “all the day”. So that it is evidently a firmly established occupation of his soul; his mind is set upon it. And that is the way we really get our strength.

Seven times it is mentioned in the Psalm that the speaker would meditate on God’s words; but you will find also that it says in verse 27 (Darby Translation), “I will meditate on thy wondrous works”, so that whether it be on His word or His work, meditation is the thing. We can pray in public, but meditation is

largely connected with what is private. Isaac, “went out to meditate in the field at the eventide” (Genesis 24: 63).

We get this set forth in the Scriptures; it implies power of spiritual concentration - a power greatly to be desired, and one which can be developed. In the epistle to the Colossians we are exhorted to set our minds on things above (chapter 3:2). It implies that our thoughts are to be concentrated on “things above”. Then in regard to moral things, the apostle says in Philippians 4: 8: “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”. Instead of our thoughts wandering about all over the world, instead of our minds being occupied in the sphere of human thought, how blessed it is to meditate upon God’s words - what He says; for how can we possibly understand their meaning if we do not meditate upon them and on His works. We can meditate on God’s works in creation, and even more on His works in redemption. We can meditate on what God has done for us. That is a habit I desire to bring before you very earnestly, that it may be developed with us, so that we may be firmly fixed in the truth.

As christians we have a wonderful object of contemplation. We are constantly reminded of it in the New Testament. In the epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, the apostle several times exhorts us to ‘consider’. “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession” (chapter 3:1). “Consider how great this man was” (chapter 7:4). “Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself” (chapter 12: 3). These and other scriptures imply a settled habit of thought.

John says, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1: 29), and “we contemplated his glory” (verse 14). And again the apostle Paul says, “we all . . . beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). That does not mean a passing thought; it implies real, spiritual concentration on what is before us. It is not the mind taken up with argumentative, logical considerations, but the mind and heart engrossed with the Person of Christ - His words and His works - with things above, with what is honest and of good report, true and virtuous, so that the soul is filled with what is good and pure, with what is lovely and of God. It is in that way that a healthy spiritual constitution is built up - because the mind is filled with Christ, with what is positive.

C. C. Elliott

In the next issue DV: “The habit of holy conversation”

A VOICE IN THE CITY—PART 1

Introduction to the series

For many years up to the late 1950s it was the practice of a group of Christians to arrange each autumn for a series of gospel preachings to be held in a public hall in the City of London. The meetings took place in the early evening and invitations were given to many who worked in city offices and businesses.

One booklet recording such preachings in the Mechanics Institute had this to say in the preface:

‘In the whole course of God’s dealings with the world, He has taken account compassionately of the cities of men... as the prophet Micah said: “The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city” ...

‘In London, as in many another great city of the world, there is increasing evidence that people are forgetful of God... Men and women are pursuing their course, regardless of impending judgment on countries that have long refused to listen to God’s speaking in this day of His favour and His attitude of blessing towards humanity.

‘In London, many times there have been outstanding testimonies of grace on the part of God rendered in the preachings of such men as Whitfield, Wesley, Spurgeon and others. God continues to send forth the testimony of His grace in this very city...

‘Many are believing the gospel and are finding salvation, and joy and peace in believing. Are you?’

Over the next few issues it is intended to reprint some of these preachings.

Ed.

A VOICE IN THE CITY—PART 1

THE SOURCE, SUBJECT, AND RESULT OF THE GOSPEL

“To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:79)

“The gospel of God ... concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 1:1-3)

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” (Romans 15:13)

I want to speak about the gospel of God, and to show you from the passage in the epistle to the Romans what that gospel is. I want to speak about it in three aspects:

the source of the gospel—that is God;

the subject of the gospel—the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ; and

the present end that God has in view in the gospel—that we might be filled with

all joy and peace in believing, and that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I would like first of all to impress upon you that the things of which we speak are moral and spiritual, but they are real! I emphasise that at the very beginning; the things of which we are speaking are real things. We live in a day of materialism, and people are apt to look upon spiritual things as being unreal, but that is not the case; they are far more real than the material things with which we have to do day by day. The apostle Paul tells us that “the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal”. That is why I say that these things are real; they are so real that they belong to eternity!

The words I read in Luke’s gospel are spoken in relation to the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and show us the conditions under which the gospel goes out, the conditions that obtained in the world when the Lord Jesus Christ was born a Saviour, and these conditions obtain today! Although these words were written by Luke nearly two thousand years ago they are true to a letter today! The same conditions obtain, in spite of the progress that man has made in material things.

I invite your attention to the unerring accuracy of the Spirit of God speaking in the Bible; He speaks for all time! We may take up the Scriptures and open them where we will; we shall find a word for us in our day. It is so here; the Scriptures are living and powerful; they are not dead but living words from the blessed God. Apart from that all is darkness. The Saviour that was about to be born was to give deliverance from sins and, “To give light to them that sit in darkness”. In the world to-day people are sitting in darkness! You may have information and news right up to the present moment but you will not find a word of certainty about the future. You are sitting in darkness! You perhaps say, ‘What does that mean?’ It means that man is in a position that he cannot alter; he is obliged to sit in darkness and no amount of activity will furnish him with light as to tomorrow. Yet there is light from God; One has come into this world, the One who is the subject of the gospel, and that blessed Person has the title, amongst others, “the light of the world”; He has brought in light from God!

Then our scripture not only speaks of those that sit in darkness but also “in the shadow of death”. There is not one in this company or in this city who is not sitting under the shadow of death. It matters not what activities may have engaged you during this day; all has been carried out with the grim shadow of death over all, but One has come into this world, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the subject of the gospel. He has “abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.” I want to speak to you of Him!

Then the scripture says, “to guide our feet into the way of peace”. What does

this world really know of peace? This country and many others are supposed to be at peace at this moment, but what a mockery this peace is! Is it peace? I challenge you, as thinking men and women, is it peace? Pick up the history book of any country and run through it; is it a record of peace? Is it not a record of strife right down the ages, either against the foe without or the traitor within? The apostle had to say in the epistle to the Romans, "the way of peace have they not known". Where has materialism brought us? How much more do men know of peace than two thousand years ago? The way of peace is still unknown! Two thousand years ago the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace, was born into this world. What did men do? He stood before them and they made their choice. They chose Barabbas, and Jesus they crucified. You may tell me, "That was the Jews!" No, my friend, for the Bible says, "both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together", and thus they made their choice! They put to death the Prince of peace, and the Originator of life, and they chose in His place a murderer! The world has made its choice and men have reaped the fruit of that choice ever since. But in the gospel God still offers the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of peace, the Originator of life, the Light of the world: God offers Him to you!

The word gospel means "good news!" Where will we find it? Shall we look around? We shall look around in vain, for every man is sitting under the shadow of death. Where shall we look? We may look up to the blessed God, and as we do so we hear His gracious invitation, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else". That is where the good news comes from: it comes from the heart of God; the compassions of God have been moved and the love of God has been in activity towards men, for the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man has appeared. Yes, it is so! the source of the gospel is God.

Now that striking call, "Look unto me", was uttered through the prophet Isaiah. In the same prophecy we read another invitation, "Come now, and let us reason together: saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool". God has spoken in the gospel and that is His side of the reasoning. So far, the speaking in this matter has been largely on one side. God has spoken, He has declared His thoughts to men in the gospel, He has made His proposals and He awaits your answer! What have men done with this gracious invitation, with this appeal of the blessed God, "Come now, and let us reason together"? Many have ignored it; eternity will show how great their loss is! Others have taken it and in a patronising way have examined it; having found that it will not fit into their system they proceed to mould the gracious invitation of God in the gospel to suit

their views, leaving out parts of the truth but not hesitating to put in other things. That is what is offered to men today in many places in the world. But there are many thousands, we thank God for every one, who have accepted the gospel and opened their hearts to receive that which God offers them, and through the grace of God there is a great number in this company who have done that!

“Look unto me!” When we look to God we find that He is the source of the gospel. Look to God, if you would receive good news; there is no other good news for man in relation to these moral and spiritual things, but if you would receive it, you must have to do with God. You may say, ‘I do not feel disposed to have to do with God’; but God is pleading with you. Think of God by His Spirit pleading with men! He says, “My spirit shall not always strive with man,” but He is striving (or pleading) with men today. We would plead with you on the behalf of God.

I was speaking to a man the other day and he suddenly turned and said, ‘Excuse me, but I make it a rule never to discuss God’. How many there are who adopt that attitude, but it is folly to leave God out! God is the source of the gospel! God says, “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God”. The man who shuts God out is a fool! He is acting against his own interests, for God is the source of the gospel. Put that prejudice out of your mind. “Prove me now...saith the Lord of hosts.” We who have “proved” the blessed God would testify to the deep peace and joy that fills our hearts.

God has been moved in the compassion and love of His heart toward you; He has provided a Saviour and so as we come to the gospel we find that the subject of the gospel is Christ. You might have thought that the subject of the gospel would have been man in all his sin but Scripture says it is “concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Now, I want to say a few words in regard to this glorious Person, firstly as to who He is and secondly as to what He has done. The scripture says, “concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh”. This blessed Person is unique; He came into the world. We were born, we had nothing to do with that, but this Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, came into manhood; it was His own act. This marks Him out as a divine Person, the Son of God. He is not to be reckoned with the rest of mankind. One speaks with adoration of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as to His own Person, He is “over all, God blessed for ever”. When He came into manhood it could be said that God was here amongst men.

When men looked at that lowly Man walking through their streets they did not know it, but they looked upon One who is God, for He never ceased to be what

He was, because of what He became. He was and ever is the blessed God Himself! In grace He stooped into manhood. He had looked down from the height of His sanctuary; He beheld the earth. God knows the conditions in which His creatures move; He knows the darkness, knows how men sit in the shadow of death and He has looked down and, more than that, has come down, as He says of old, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people... and I am come down to deliver them". God Himself, in the Person of Jesus, has stooped into manhood, God Himself come down to deliver!

Now, it must be evident that if God comes on to this earth, He must take account of the scene into which He comes; if the holy God comes into a scene like this, He must either look upon the scene and judge it as being wholly unsuited to His presence or else He must look with compassion upon the whole scene and deliver man and bless him. God, in the Person of Jesus, has done that! He had looked upon the scene, taken account of man and the condition in which he was and in compassion He has become man's Deliverer!

It is evident that if man is to be delivered from certain conditions, the Deliverer Himself must take up those conditions, and that is what God has done in the Person of Jesus! Man lay under death and the Lord Jesus Christ went into death that He might deliver those "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage". If man lay in death, Christ had to go into death; if man lay under sin, He who was to deliver man must bear the penalty of sin. Men accept death as inevitable; they make their wills; they know that they have to die.

What does the Bible say? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). "The wages of sin is death", and the Lord Jesus Christ went into death. He bore the penalty of sin and the judgment and wrath of God on account of the sins of others. He bore it in order that He might be the Deliverer. Who bore the penalty of sin? Jesus, and who was Jesus? None other than God Himself, manifest in flesh. Think of the marvel of it all, that God should have stooped to this earth and applied Himself to man's condition that He might be man's Saviour!

I want to speak for a moment in a very definite way in relation to the death of Christ. The central fact of the gospel is the death and resurrection of Christ; if we are to live to God we must see we have our moral beginnings in the cross and death of Christ. The apostle says, "I declare unto you the gospel ... by which also ye are saved, ... unless ye have believed in vain, ... which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4).

Let it not be thought for a single moment that I would take anything away from the glorious lustre of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ; His life was unique, a life lived under the eye of God wholly and entirely to His pleasure. But we are not saved by the life of Jesus. Man needed a Redeemer, not a reformer! Man needed a Saviour and not a model!

You say perhaps, 'Is He not presented in the Bible as a Model?' He is, but not to men in their sins; He is presented as a Model to those who have believed and who have the Holy Spirit and thus have the power, according to the grace given them of God, to walk here after the pattern of Christ. Look at the epistle to the Romans, the great unfolding of the gospel. I do not think you will find a single verse dealing with the life of Jesus; it is all covered in that one expression, "made of the seed of David according to the flesh," then the necessity for His death is immediately introduced. The life of Jesus referred to in chapter 5:10, is His life as a risen, ascended, glorified Man in heaven (see Hebrews 7: 25). I want to be definite about this, because I know from speaking to people that there is this other gospel being preached and finding acceptance amongst men; the life of Jesus is being put before men as something more palatable than the death of Jesus. Why did Jesus die? Why was His blood shed and His life given up? It was in order that He might become the Redeemer! That by the shedding of His precious blood, redemption's work might be accomplished! That is what He has done!

The apostle Paul writing to the Galatians says, "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Why should he be accursed? Because anyone who preaches any other gospel robs man of his Saviour and God of His glory. Jesus went into death that men might have a Saviour presented to them. Examine the Scriptures for yourself! No words of mine could embellish the life of Jesus; every moment was taken account of under the eye of God but that perfect life had to be laid down.

It is most important to see that the life of Jesus was perfect. A sin-offering to be accepted before God must be "without blemish". This indeed was true of Jesus and imparts to His sacrifice its unique character. He went into death and bore the judgment of God on account of our sins. He was the Lamb of God, which beareth away the sin of the world; but when was it that as the Lamb of God He bore away the sin of the world? The Scriptures are plain: He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," i.e., at Calvary. There He accomplished the great work of atonement; He suffered in His body under the hand of God and then He went into death, having said, "It is finished"; "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit".

He delivered up His spirit and went into death. He suffered the wrath of God on account of sin; He met the whole question of sin, and sin's penalty, in His own body on the tree. His blood was shed; He went into death; the shed blood is evidence of the life given up. Why was His life given up? Because "without shedding of blood is no remission."

He has not only done this work for the blessed God, and removed sin from before the eye of God, but He has gone into death, bearing the full penalty of sin, as decreed by God. On account of the work which He did, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord is preached to you as glad tidings and it is falling on your ears at this moment. Jesus went into death, was buried and He rose again. God raised Him from the dead and has given Him glory, and now He presents to you a blessed, living, glorified Man at His right hand, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour! That is the gospel.

Now we come into the good of this by believing! The gospel is preached for the obedience of faith. Some one may say, 'Faith is a difficulty with me'. There is no need for it to be a difficulty! In a word it is just this: God speaks, and I believe! Scripture says, Abraham "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness". This good news is for you if you believe. I would beg of you to accept the glorious gospel of the blessed God, to receive it into your heart and to do so now! Do not say: 'I will investigate it; I will think it over'. Think of the source from which it comes! Receive it at this present moment into your heart; lift up your heart to God and, without attempting to justify yourself, thank Him for the light of the gospel and for a Saviour who is Christ the Lord, who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification.

Now I want to say something about the results of the gospel, for God has a glorious end before Him which spreads beyond time into eternity. The second passage that we read from Romans says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing". Those who believe are filled with joy and peace, the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto them and they enjoy a peace that this world knows nothing of and cannot take away. It is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" and it may be known by every heart subject to Christ. The hymn says:

*'Yes, peace ! since every claim is met,
Lord Jesus, by Thy blood,
And Thou, our peace, art ris'n and set
On high by God.'*

Then God's word says, "That ye may abound in hope". Does your heart abound in hope when you scan the headlines of the morning newspaper? I know it does

not; often men are plunged into the depths of despair but the believer has the Holy Spirit within him. God not only gives the forgiveness of sins on account of belief on the finished work of Christ but He gives the Holy Spirit that we may abound in hope! What buoyancy this gives in a world like this, as day by day we see the dark history of this world being unfolded! The believer has that within which lifts them above it all and abounds in hope. The very suggestion of hope is a clear indication that there is something yet beyond. It is not the hope of speculation but the hope of anticipation! The thing is certain; we look forward to being with and like Christ in the glory of God! We look “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Can you afford to look forward? You can if you are a christian, but you cannot if you are not! If you receive Christ, you gain all; if you reject Christ you lose all and you lose your soul!

I would appeal in closing to many of our christian friends who are present. You love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you know that He died for you. To you I would say: God is building another world; men, too, are building another world—a brand new world they call it; but I can think of nothing more disappointing than for a believer to be using his energy in building up man’s world, yet alas, how many are doing it! Christian friend, by faith you are a son of God in Christ Jesus and as a son you have an inheritance on the other side of death. Would you sell your inheritance for a mess of pottage, something merely to be seen materially now? Oh! fellow believer, I would urge you to look into this. God is building another world, and He is building upon Christ. He is the foundation and centre and substance of that world and nothing but Christ will go in there.

Well, this is what we believe, what we enjoy, what we preach. “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” I would beg of you, dear friend, as I close, if anything I have said is not clear to you from the Scriptures, not to go out in a mist of doubt. Make your difficulty known and let us speak together of these things; we would like to be “your servants for Jesus’ sake”.

Alec. Barnes

In the next issue DV: “Happiness”