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Living Water

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THE PRINCE OF PEACE

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My desire is to uplift the Lord Jesus Christ and to speak of Him as the “Prince of Peace”. This theme runs through both the Old and the New Testaments and focuses our attention on the first and the second coming of Christ. Without Christ we could not know peace at all. He is our peace. He has made peace and He gives His peace to us!

Isaiah says of Him that, “His name shall be called Wonderful”, and it is true that the name of Jesus is “an ointment poured forth”; it is so beautiful and fragrant to all who love Him. His name has to do with the saving of “his people from their sins” and it is the sweetest name in heaven or on earth. When He was on earth many cried out to Him, using His personal name of “Jesus” and received His blessing. That precious name was also written over the cross: “Jesus of Nazareth” but now as the hymn writer says, ‘He bears the greatest noblest name’. God has highly exalted Him and “given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God the Father’s glory”. How wonderful the name of Jesus is! He is altogether lovely.

He also has the name of “Counsellor” reminding us of His wisdom. The Queen of Sheba came to Solomon with her hard questions and he answered them all. The Lord Jesus is greater than Solomon! Think of the wisdom of Jesus. Even as a Boy in the temple the teachers wondered at His understanding and answers and later on His critics said, “Whence has this man this wisdom and these works of power?”. The whole earth awaits the coming of Jesus. The government shall be upon His shoulder and He will exercise a perfect reign for one thousand years, succeeding where others have failed!

Isaiah also speaks of Him as “Mighty God”; that reminds us of the greatness and mystery of His holy Person. He was found here in infancy, and in every way a real man, yet as J. N. Darby says in his hymn: ‘we see the Godhead glory shine though that human veil’. He was, and is, “God over all, blessed for evermore”. He is the Creator of all things — “Upholding all things by the word of his power”. People said of Jesus, “What sort of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him” (Matthew 8:27)? Have you ever seen a man like that, one who could speak to the waves of the sea and command the wind and be obeyed? Never! No, here on earth in lowly manhood’s guise was the Creator, the “Mighty

God". Well may we bow down to Him in holy worship. That is what 'doubting' Thomas did, calling Jesus "My Lord and my God".

Then Jesus is called "Father of Eternity". In a natural family a father is the provider and protector. Jesus was that to His disciples, loving them, caring for them, protecting them. In the garden of Gethsemane He protected them. He said, "If ye seek me let these go their way". The title "Father of Eternity" of course looks on to the world to come and suggests the character of the government that is going to be seen in Him.

Psalm 72 tells us something of it: "for he shall deliver the needy who crieth and the afflicted who have no helper. He will have compassion on the poor and needy". What a compassionate provider and protector Jesus is and will be!

He is the Prince of Peace... "of his government and of peace there shall be no end". The whole creation groans and travails now and there is no human answer; there cannot be for the earth awaits the coming of the Prince of Peace. When Solomon came to the throne, although he had a mighty army he did not need to use it for there was "neither adversary nor evil intent". So when the Lord Jesus comes to reign, there will be a thousand years of righteousness and peace!

Moving on through the prophets we read in Zechariah: "This man shall be peace". Then in Luke's gospel we read: "A Saviour has been born to you in David's city". And then "a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good pleasure in men". It is true that God's plan was peace for the earth, and it still is. It waits to be realised and will be when the Saviour is finally accorded His rightful place in this scene.

In Luke chapter 7, a woman who was a sinner comes into the house of the Pharisee. We can all identify with this, for the woman was troubled about her sins — and she comes to the only place a sinner can come, to the feet of Jesus! There, and only there, she receives this wonderful word, "Thy sins are forgiven ... thy faith has saved thee; go in peace". Peace is something settled and sure and it is essential to have peace in relation to our sins, but if you are unsure, you can come to Jesus now and receive His forgiveness.

In Luke 8, another troubled soul is set before us — a woman with personal problems and anxieties. Whatever your problems may be, one thing is sure, that Jesus knows them all. This woman said to herself, "If I shall but touch the hem of his garment I shall be made well", and in faith she reached out. She touched the living Saviour and she was "made well". Jesus knew that power had gone out from Him and He draws her into the midst and asks her why she had touched Him. (It is wonderful to hear someone tell how they have touched the Saviour

and been healed.) She confesses before all and receives the precious word from Jesus, “Thy faith has saved thee, go in peace”.

My desire in speaking of Jesus as the Prince of Peace is that we might be more like Him. In Luke 9, unfortunately James and John are not like Him; they are ready to call down fire from heaven but Jesus showed them a better way. Then in chapter 10 He sends out seventy others also; if they went into a house they were to say “peace to this house” and if a son of peace was there, then the peace would abide there, but that was not all. If a son of peace was there, then greater blessing would follow. The Prince of Peace would also come! What a wonderful blessing for any household.

When Jesus was about to leave His disciples, He comforted their troubled hearts saying: “I give my peace to you:…Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it fear” (John 14:27) Think of the cloudless peace He ever enjoyed, in daily communion with His God and Father. He says: “I give my peace to you”. May we know something of His peace through closer communion with Him.

Now, later in the Bible, we read that Jesus “made peace”. For in Him “all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and by him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross”. Think of the cost that is referred to here. Think of the cost of resolving all that had come in to disturb and disrupt the relationship between God and men for we were “alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works”. The cost was the precious blood of Jesus and by this means peace was made.

The blood is firstly for God. The blood was on the mercy seat. Ephesians says, “to reconcile all things to itself”. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit — the fulness, satisfied by that “once for all” sacrifice and the result is that God can freely reconcile us to Himself.

On the first day of the week, the resurrection day, the message was a message of peace! The work on the cross was finished and Jesus brings to His fearful disciples this message: “peace be to you”. He shows to them His hands and His side, to bring home to them that everything was completed and that as risen He was the same Jesus and that in Him they now had real, settled and eternal peace. The message was given to them a second time. “Jesus said therefore again to them, Peace be to you.” The disciples were being sent out in service, not as those who were fearful and troubled but with peace in their hearts.

As the testimony spreads Peter, as recorded in Acts 10, preaches to the gentiles. He says: “The word which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (he is Lord of all things) ye know”. Now this peace is preached to

you, the gentiles, peace in the same glorious risen Saviour. There is not only personal salvation but the barrier between Jew and Gentile has been removed, for “He is our peace who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of enclosure ... that he might form the two in himself into one new man making peace...” Let us remember that all barriers are removed in the death of Christ. We are reconciled to God and to one another by the cross. God has slain the enmity at the cross and has formed “one new man” so that we might be able to worship Him together. “For through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father” (Ephesians 2:18).

Finally, in the Revelation, the thought of His coming again is linked with the Prince of Peace. There is a longing for Him in the hearts of His own. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come”.

“Come”. What a lovely word that is! It is Jesus who first said “Come” to us (Matthew 11:28), drawing us to Himself. He said “Come” to Peter and Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water to go to Jesus. How powerful the appeal of that word, securing countless souls from a lost eternity!

Now, in the Revelation, it is the Spirit and the bride saying “Come” to Jesus. Let me ask you a question. Are you asking the Lord Jesus to come, to come for His bride, to come and take up His rights in this world where they have so long been denied Him? He is coming soon. He will come on clouds of heaven with power and great glory as the King of Kings and Lord of lords.

He will come first for His bride. He came Himself to save us and He will come Himself to take us to be with Him for ever. “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with an assembling shout” and “the dead in Christ shall rise first and we the living who remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we be forever with the Lord”.

In the waiting time may we be united with the Holy Spirit in saying “Come, Lord Jesus” and may His peace preside in our hearts, for His name’s sake.

Come, Prince of Peace, for now the sands are run!
The root of David Thou, yet David’s son.
Man of the Father’s choice, faithful and tried.
“Come” saith the Spirit’s voice, “Come” saith the bride.

Brian Parr
Address at St Anne’s, July 2000

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS — CHAPTER 3

(Highlights of a reading)

The purpose of this chapter is to show us just what we are, so that we have no alternative but to cry out to God for mercy. The section is condemnatory of us and it is best for us to accept this judgment. We know what is in ourselves; we accept God's condemnation of it and then we are able to judge it.

Paul says: "what things were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss" (Philippians 3:7). That does not refer to what was to his advantage materially; he was speaking of what he was as of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of the Hebrews. Those things he counted loss; they were a hindrance. Relying on those type of things is only a hindrance. We have to count it all loss. It brings us back to the sin offering. The whole of the animal with even its dung had to be burned outside the camp. God has removed the first man in totality at the cross and we need to lay hold of that.

Paul was writing to a cosmopolitan company. There were Jews, Greeks and Romans and the epistle is aimed at all classes. It is one thing to endorse the underlying truths of christianity but quite another to say that I really belong in these verses and to say with conviction that this puts us all on the same ground. If we are all without righteousness (the first section of the chapter) then we are shut up to the righteousness of God. Psalm 14, which is quoted in the chapter, says, "Jehovah looked down from the heavens upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. They have all gone aside" (vv 2, 3).

In verse 20 we read: "by works of law no flesh shall be justified before God". Then the apostle moves to the ground of the gospel and states plainly that there is a basis of righteousness which is of God's own providing so that we should be justified, and it is apart from law. There is "righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ towards all, and upon all those who believe".

It is very encouraging that it is borne witness to by the law and the prophets (i.e. the writings of Moses and then the prophetic scriptures). To see that the scriptures were looking forward to a basis on which man could be just with God apart from law is encouraging. It is always good for a christian to read the Old Testament expecting to find the grace of God foreshadowed in it. It is an attractive line to follow in the Old Testament — the desire of God to bring in what the law and the prophets foreshadowed and what the law of Moses could not bring to pass. "Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not; but thou hast prepared me a body" (Hebrews 10:5).

It is wonderful that righteousness from God should be upon all who believe. It is more than forgiveness; it is righteousness from God. It is towards all, so no one is shut out from it but for those who believe, it is upon them. This brings in the truth of 'propitiation' and 'substitution'. God's favour is towards all because of Christ's death. That is propitiation. "He loved us, and sent his Son a propitiation..." (1 John 4:10). He is able to display His favour because of the death of Christ. Scripture refers in plain terms to the Lord being the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). The Bible does not actually use the word 'substitution'. However, it expresses, as far as we understand it, what we mean by the Lord taking our place. A great deal is gathered up in "propitiation". It means that the claims of the throne of God were met by the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus regardless of whether any one believed it or not. It opens the way for the gospel.

In the death of Christ both sin and the sinner are put out of God's sight but in such a manner that there is a way of salvation; instead of man bearing the judgment, the Lord Jesus bore the judgment and therefore God is free to express His heart. The knowledge of this is intended to bring us into liberty. That is the great advantage of "being justified". Believers are thoroughly in the presence of God with no guilt upon them whatsoever and ready for whatever place God might see fit to give them. The prodigal son (Luke 15) hoped that he might at least have some place with the servants but what he found (and what believers in the Lord Jesus find) is that there has not just been the meeting of our sins but that the believer is established in the favour of God.

We should never cease to marvel that God could bring this all about. Through the Person and work of our Lord Jesus not one iota of God's righteousness has ever been given up. God has lost nothing of His righteousness, all is maintained and we are counted righteous through faith. In the next chapter we read, "to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Romans 4:5). On the ground of faith, the believer is reckoned righteous.

We get an illustration in Leviticus 16 in the two goats that were to be brought on the day of atonement. Lots were cast; one goat was for God and the other was for man. One goat was sacrificed and the blood of the goat was put on the mercy seat. In that way the claims and the rights of God were met. The other goat was taken, and the priest was to lay both his hands on the head of the goat and confess over it all the sins of the people and put them upon the goat. It was then sent away into the wilderness so that the sins of the people might be set aside from God's view.

The whole of Leviticus 16 is very sobering because it comes in on account of the failure of the priesthood. Limits are imposed on the access to the presence of God but on the day of atonement all that had built up over the past year was, for the time being, resolved. The priests themselves needed to be cleansed as well as the people.

The work of Christ is vast. “He is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2). That is the basis for God’s grace being “toward all”. Paul tells Timothy that the Lord gave Himself a ransom for all.

Highlights of a Bible reading, Bromley, March 2001.

LOOKING AHEAD

Introduction

I want to say a word tonight about the need for looking ahead. Paul told the Philippians that he was “forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before” (Philippians 3:13, 14). I seek, with the Spirit’s help, to bring before you this evening some of the joys that can be ours by stretching out to the things that are before. Of course, Paul’s exhortation to forget the things that are behind is not always easy to do and most here tonight would understand that. But what I have in mind particularly is to draw attention to the blessings that can be ours by stretching out to the things that are before.

I wish to draw attention to persons who felt things according to God and sought the way forward. Of course there is the hope that each one of us has before us — the hope of being eternally with our Lord Jesus Christ. What a day that will be, when He will come upon the clouds; there will be the archangel’s voice and we will be caught up to be forever with the Lord. There will not be anything to look behind for then, for everything will be before us. What a comfort and joy it should be to our affections to know that it is only a little while until He comes.

I want to say a few words about the need for each one of us to go forward under the conscious leading and guidance of our Lord Jesus. Sometimes we look forward and just hope that things will be a little different from the way they are today but when we look into scripture, what we find is that God provided guidance to those who felt things according to God, and who were then used of God to bring in encouragement and blessing. I would raise the challenge tonight, as to whether we are like that.

Hannah

And there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite. And he had two wives: the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. ... And it came to pass when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of Jehovah.

1 Samuel 1:1-2, 20

And Samuel ministered before Jehovah, a boy girded with a linen ephod. And his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to sacrifice the yearly sacrifice.

1 Samuel 2:18-19

I have read of Hannah, a woman who felt things according to God. Hannah's name means 'grace', and if we are to carry the burdens of the testimony today, we must be marked by grace. It has been suggested that if there was any one moral feature that was predominant in Christ, it was the feature of grace. We need a greater supply of grace to meet the needs of the testimony today.

So Hannah felt the conditions that existed. One thing we find here is that outwardly there was blessing with Peninnah but not with Hannah. We cannot say why that is but we do know that it was allowed of God. Yet Hannah is the one who will commit herself to the testimony and to the reproach but she does so as coming into the presence of the Lord and feeling things as God feels them. She did not just look back but she looked forward with God in the confidence of what He was able to do. She says, 'If I can have a man-child I will give him to Jehovah for the whole of his life'. She made a committal. How many of us are truly committed to Christ in the present day? We come to christian gatherings regularly; perhaps we may even participate in them but christianity is much more than that; it is having to do with Christ personally and the enjoyment of our personal link with Him.

Well, Hannah bore a son and called his name Samuel which means, 'heard of God' or 'asked for of God'. It is possible to pray constantly for something that is upon your heart yet there does not seem to be an answer to that prayer. Hannah's prayer comes from a woman who is truly committed to the Lord. We need increasingly to be committed to Christ in the pathway in which He has set us. It is the moral line that needs to be established amongst us so that we become persons who walk here constantly with our Lord Jesus Christ. Persons who carry the burdens of the testimony, yet are not overwhelmed, are bearing them up

before the One who is able for everything. And so we find that in Hannah's history that Samuel is born. She can say that "Jehovah has granted me my petition which I asked of him".

Then I read the verses in chapter 2 because, as we commit ourselves to the Lord, what is for Christ is developed in the heart. Samuel was young here and I would appeal especially to those that are young. The Lord seeks your committal to Him. He seeks true devotedness. Are you prepared to be committed to Christ? Are you going to grow in the knowledge of Himself? Perhaps we become discouraged as we look around and see the condition of things but let us forget those things which are behind and stretch out to the things that are before.

You may say, 'What is there before?' The answer is Christ, and He is going to fill eternity. He will fill the heart of every one there. We can experience that in the little while that is left to us while we are here. We can have the joy of Christ filling our affections. Though you may be young and may feel very unable in the pathway in which the Lord has set you, yet His love and His eye is upon you and He wants you to be a blessing in the place where He has placed you.

What an encouragement it is to see growth in the hearts of young ones today, to see them developing in the things of the Lord and committed in a simple way. Some of the younger ones may say, 'I am not able to do things that others can do'. Well, maybe not, but you can bring in encouragement to others, especially older believers by your committal to Christ. As you express your love for Him, as you confess the name of Jesus to your parents, as you may give out a tract in the street, it brings joy to the hearts of older believers for it is the evidence of divine growth going on.

Hannah was watching out for growth. It says of Hannah that she made him a little coat and brought it up from year to year. Oh, you think of her making that little coat. How painstaking it would be. She would know just exactly what size was needed when she brought it up from year to year, the product of her own work as before the Lord. In Samuel's case it was physical growth, but for us it would speak of what is spiritual. Let us be more alert as to the progress of God's work amongst the younger ones and see that we foster it. Perhaps we keep things too much above their heads but the little coat would bring it just down to where they are, just taking account of what they are able for and meeting the need of the moment. Who can provide the little coat? I would suggest that you provide it, as coming from the presence of the Lord. Hannah was in communion with the Lord and accordingly she knew the needs of the moment and had the skill to bring the answer in. That is all part of brethren dwelling together in unity (See Psalm 133:1), old and young merged together in the development of what is precious for the heart of Christ today.

Samuel

And Jehovah called again the third time, Samuel! And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And Eli perceived that Jehovah was calling the boy. And Eli said to Samuel, Go, lie down; and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah, for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And Jehovah came, and stood, and called as at the other times, Samuel, Samuel! And Samuel said, Speak, for thy servant heareth.

1

Samuel 3:8-10

I move on now to Chapter 3 to speak for a moment of Samuel and God's call to him. If we are to go forward for the Lord it must be in answer to His call. Three times here Samuel is called and three times he goes to Eli; I want to draw attention to the need for us each one to have to do with the Lord personally.

It is so easy when problems arise to go and talk to another believer about it, but there is power in taking things to the Lord. I raise the question with each one of us as to whether we recognise His voice. Three times Samuel did not recognise His voice; he thought it was Eli calling. You cannot blame Samuel for that for he did not have the experience to know that it was Jehovah calling him. But Eli has the discernment; even though he represents that which is failing yet he has the discernment to say to Samuel, 'It is Jehovah who is calling thee.'

The encouragement that he brings to Samuel is a word that I would seek tonight to bring into the hearts of every one, both young and old. Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah, for thy servant heareth". Have we got ears to hear what the Lord is saying today? Perhaps you think that it is all so difficult and that things in the testimony are very confusing and hard to understand. Well, let us come back to scripture and see what God says in His word. "If he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah, for thy servant heareth". Are we in the spirit of hearing what God has to say, or are we so much marked by what we have to say that we lay it all out before Him in prayer and then spend no time to hear the answer?

We need in the present day to have ears to hear the answer to our prayers. What is God saying? We need to come into the presence of the Lord Himself, to understand His word and His voice. Surely it is the voice of One well known. Is it not a voice that you knew in the gospel? Is it not the voice that you answered to when you came in your sins? God's voice has not changed. His heart has not changed. Oh, I would urge you to come into His presence and be as one that would hear what He has to say.

Yet if you and I would hear His word we must be committed; we must be willing to accept it. The Lord is the supreme example for us. When all the pressure was upon Him in the garden of Gethsemane He said, “not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42). What a model He is! His ear was opened morning by morning to hear as the instructed (see Isaiah 50:4, 5). Oh, may we hear what God has to say. Then we will be serviceable to Him and committed to the pathway of faith.

Peter

But Jesus immediately spoke to them, saying, Take courage: it is I: be not afraid. And Peter answering him said, Lord, if it be thou, command me to come to thee upon the waters. And he said, Come. Matthew 14:27 - 29 (part)

I now turn to Matthew’s gospel. We know, in the account here, that the Lord stretches out His hand to Peter and Peter learns the divine grace that meets his need where he is and takes him up. But I seek to apply this scripture tonight, that we might be more governed by the word of God and less by the circumstances that arise that appear to be against us. As we look ahead there is always a tendency to see the things that may be against us, the winds and the waves that are there. Matthew 14 shows us quite clearly that God was well able to quell the waves and the wind before Peter set out upon the water but the Lord did not do so. He called to him to come while the waves and the winds were still there. We, too, need to learn, having perhaps sought God’s mind through circumstances, that the circumstances themselves may be God acting providentially and that I need to be guided by His word rather than the circumstances.

Of course, God may use circumstances to confirm matters and He is able to open doors and to shut doors. Yet we may find that there are many things which appear to be against us taking a certain course for the Lord. You may say ‘Why does God not remove the difficulty?’ Well, the answer is that it is good for our souls that they are there because in them we prove what He, and His love, can be to us in the midst of those circumstances. Paul had a thorn for the flesh and it was not taken away, even though he asked the Lord three times to do so. Why? Because it resulted in him being more serviceable to the Lord.

I would just commend this to our hearts, that we might know what the love of Christ can be. He would have us to look ahead, forgetting those things which are behind. We can look ahead with confidence because He is with us and He will see us through until the end.

May it be so for His name’s sake.

Keith Wickens

Extracted from an address at Hampton, 7th September 1996

THE MAN AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND

“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”. (Hebrews 10:12)

There is One in yonder glory I have loved for many years,
He has cleared my guilty conscience, He has banished all my fears,
And I seek to spread His goodness, while I'm waiting hour by hour,
For His long expected coming — for the moment of His power,
With the loins tightly girded, on the highway and the hearth —
With the rays of coming glory shining back upon the path,
What a poor and empty bubble — what a poor and gilded toy,
Seems the world with all its treasures, in the view of future joy —
Of the joy of being with Him who for me in death did stand,
Whom I ever love to think of as the Man at God's right hand.

In the daily toil of business — in the hourly trial and fight —
When I wake up in the morning — when I sink to sleep at night —
There's a deep and earnest longing, there's a yearning of the heart,
For the bright and blessed moment when we never more shall part.
And the eye of faith is upward, 'mid the struggle and the strife,
For the coming Hope of Glory — for the Joy and Crown of Life.

The One there crowned with honour has been in this desert scene —
The suffering Man of Sorrows — the lowly Nazarene;
The Lord of Life and Glory, the Holy One of God.
Who bore in grace and meekness, the mocking, scourge and rod;
Who conquered death and Satan, and for the sinner died,
And by the Father's glory was raised and glorified;
And from that throne He's coming to call His saints away
From every taint of evil, to share His eternal day.

Are you ready, christian, ready for the trump, and shout, and voice?
Would His coming make you tremble, or cause you to rejoice?
Are you walking, talking with Him; trusting Him with all your care?
Do you live so close to heaven that a breath would waft you there?
Or is the heart and spirit chained and rooted in the earth,
Instead of on the mansions, on the place of heavenly birth?
Is your heart and walk so loyal, that your spirit would rejoice.
Any day, or hour, or moment, to hear His blessed voice?
Are you watching, waiting for Him? Does your heart with joy expand
At the very thought of seeing the Man of God's right hand?
He is coming in a moment — in a twinkling of an eye,
No time will be allotted just to utter one 'Goodbye';
No time to kiss the children, or embrace the loving wife,
If they are but united in the bonds of human life.

The darkness seems to thicken, and the scenes of sin increase,
They may move my heart to pity but they cannot touch my peace,
For my peace is in the glory, where I shortly hope to be,
To raise my 'Alleluia' unto Him who died for me.
There's a deep and cherished craving, as I hasten on my race,
For the long expected greeting, for the seeing face to face;
For the thrilling trumpet sounding, for the ceasing here to roam;
For the entering in the mansions, and the longed for joys of home.

Like an anxious watcher standing, with the hand upon the latch,
In eager expectation for the first faint gleam to catch,
I peer up through the midnight, and upon the threshold stand,
With a grateful heart to welcome the Man from God's right hand.

George Cutting

THE COMING OF THE KING

Yet, if His Majesty, our sovereign lord,
Should, of his own accord
Friendly himself invite,
And say, 'I'll be your guest tomorrow night,'
How should we stir ourselves, call and command
All hands to work! 'Let no man idle stand!'

'Set me fine Spanish tables in the hall;
See they be fitted all;
Let there be room to eat
And order taken that there be no want of meat.
See every sconce and candlestick made bright,
That without tapers they may give a light.

'Look to the presence. Are the carpets spread?
The dais o'er the head?
The cushions on the chairs,
And all the candles lighted on the stairs?
Perfume the chambers, and in any case
Let each man give attendance in his place!'

Thus, if a king were coming would we do;
And 'twere good reason too.
For 'tis a duteous thing
To show all honour to an earthly king,
And after all our travail and our cost
So he be pleased, to think no labour lost.

But at the coming of the King of glory,
All's quite another story;
We wallow in our sin.
Christ cannot find a chamber in the inn
We entertain Him always like a stranger,
And, as at first, still lodge Him in the manger.

Attributed to Henry Vaughan (1622 -1695)

“GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD”

The following notes and requests for prayer come first hand from contacts in the countries concerned.

KENYA

Kenya is one of those countries where the majority of the population professes the christian faith. Of recent times many well known evangelists have visited the capital, Nairobi, with the good news. The large number attending such crusades, estimated at several hundreds of thousands, reflects the spiritual feverishness among many. This mass attendance was accompanied by large numbers of conversions, yet Kenya is rated among the most corrupt countries. One wonders whether these conversions are reflected in the lives of the people...Please pray for true and faithful christian living among Kenya's believers, as the salt and light of the world.

*Paul M Kisau
Machakos, Kenya.*

NIGERIA

Nigeria, popularly known as the 'giant of Africa', has a growing population of about 120 million people of different tribes and religions. We thank God for the current President, Olusegun Obassnjo, a committed christian with vision. His presence at the helm of the government has wrought great change in the lives of Nigerians.

Work goes on with the translation of the Bible into Igala even though my co-translator, Adem Agabi, passed into glory at the end of last year.

Please pray for the President and for the Bible translation project. Please also pray that we "might know him and the power of his resurrection".

*Sunday Edo
Anyigba, Nigeria.*

POLAND

Poland has a population of 38 million people. Most of them (95%) claim to be Roman Catholics.

Janina Janulek from Zabrze has been working among Gipsy children and families for over three years. She co-operates with a few volunteers from a local church and she needs much prayer and support.

Very blessed work is led by brother Jack Pikula in Katowice. He works among street children and homeless people. He also needs our prayers and support.

*Jerzy Karzelek
Skoczow, Poland*

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is a thoroughly religious country, with its various systems of faith. Islam and Hinduism continue to go ahead and enjoy a good share of publicity. The cult of ancestor worship still makes progress.

Sangomas, or traditional healers [formerly known as witch doctors] are gaining status and reputation. Their practice involves not simply a knowledge and application of traditional folk medicine, but also occult practices, especially consultation with ancestral spirits, who play a major role....Recently a young African Roman Catholic nun has announced her intention to become a sangoma alongside her activities as a professing christian! This has received substantial and appreciative write up in a leading daily paper.

Clearly, the need for the power of the gospel is as great as ever, and in the face of adverse conditions the work of evangelical churches and missions is going ahead.... Growth and progress are most in evidence among the Indian community and the Zulu and Xhosa speaking people.

Raymond Aitcheson

Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

Extracted from "International Partnership Perspectives"

“HIS NAME IS CALLED WONDERFUL...”

Isaiah 9:6-7

The opening verses of Isaiah chapter 9 show us God speaking in mercy, despite the dark background of the people of Israel. God is once again intervening in His mercy when all is dark and depressed. God delights in mercy. Mercy is what we need; the way back to God is impossible otherwise. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” The “due time” is God’s intervention in mercy.

Isaiah tells us: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath light shone” (Isaiah 9:2). This is the divine description of men in their sins - walking in darkness, and dwelling in the shadow of death. In the one, works of sin, self-seeking, self-will and unbelief; in the other, bondage, fear, uncertainty and distance from God. But now, in Jesus, is seen a “great light”. His life is the light; every kind of man is manifested in his true position and condition by the light but it is also the way out of darkness; it is heaven’s illumination. Let that light shine into your soul. “Awake thou that sleepest and arise from among the dead, and the Christ will shine upon thee.”

Darkness and death are repelling. From that thick darkness and gloom of death, humanity is crying out for a deliverer. How joyfully we can point to the Deliverer - "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given". The mystery of the incarnation is contained in those words. God manifest in flesh, God come in amongst humanity in an understandable, compassionate, confidence-inspiring way. It is unto "us" that the son is given. This is the great downstopping of divine love.

Yet the prophet has still greater things to say. The government is to be on His shoulder. Christ's government is to increase. Not for Him an unstable throne. Peace will flourish in His empire. Judgment and righteousness will be the great pillars upholding His kingdom. Will this be an actual reign of Christ? Yes, it will indeed but the question for each of us is this: 'Is He reigning in our hearts now?' Is His peace guarding our hearts now?

Isaiah goes on to dwell on the majesty of the five-fold name that is given here. His name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace". All this is what Christ is ready to be for the believer now.

"Wonderful" suggests the excellency of Christ above all others. Is He not wonderful as our Redeemer? Is not His power over death wonderful? In this way the mind and heart are to be captivated, making the Lord in His Person more and more attractive.

As "Counsellor" He is the completer of divine counsels. For us, amid the complexities of life, He is the One ever ready to guide us: "I will counsel thee with my eye upon thee" (Psalm 33:8).

"Mighty God". Christ is indeed Man, but He is also God Almighty. He is all-sufficient for our affections and all-powerful to vanquish our foes. He is the maintainer of our cause.

Then, He is "Father of Eternity". Christ is the Originator of life but He also triumphantly says: "Behold, I and the children that God has given me". Do you enjoy that happy position - your spiritual beginnings traced back to Christ and your life a continuous display of the features of His life?

Finally, He is the "Prince of Peace". Spiritual prosperity is found only where He reigns. Peace for a turbulent, troubled world can only be when He comes to reign. Yet what prosperity, calmness, serenity and restfulness there is when He is Prince to us. God has made peace through the blood of Christ's cross. We are justified by faith and have peace towards God. He is our peace.

Tom Gratten

JAMES AND JOHN WANTING TO SIT NEXT TO THE LORD IN THE KINGDOM

**Mark 10: 46-52
11: 1-11**

The Lord said to His disciples: “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be delivered up to the chief priests and to the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him up to the nations: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him”. That is the way, a downward way, a path of sorrow, suffering, shame, rejection and death. Is that the end of it? No! “And after three days he shall rise again”. There is an outlet in resurrection and it does not stop there. It goes right on to glory.

Now that is the very moment that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come to Jesus and say “Teacher” (not Master), “Teacher, we would that whatsoever we may ask of thee, thou wouldst do it for us. And he said to them, What would ye that I should do for you?” They say, “Give to us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory”. What did they know about glory? He had told them about a downward way. Yes, but their eye was on glory.

Where did they get their impressions of the glory? Jesus had taken them, as recorded in chapter 9 of Mark, to a high mountain apart by themselves. Doubtless that was an actual mountain in Palestine. I have no doubt there was an effulgent glory there. A threefold glory indeed is spoken of: His own, the Father’s and that of the holy angels. It speaks of a glory that will be displayed in the world to come but I would like to engage your mind tonight with what I might call moral glory. You do not need to go to a high mountain in Palestine to behold it. It all centres in a Man.

He led them up into a high mountain apart by themselves. Why? You can get no impression of glory on the plain. You can get no impression of glory on the battlefields of Europe. People speak of glorious victories. What are they? Their glory is their shame. You can get no impression of glory amidst men down here. He led them up to a high mountain apart by themselves. You have to get away with that blessed Man, above all the miasmas and mists of this world. You have to get on to a moral elevation to learn what glory is. He led them there and He was transfigured before them.

Do you suppose that the transfiguration added anything to that Man? Nothing! For thirty years He had walked in obscurity under the eye of God. But when at His baptism He came into public evidence, at the beginning of His active ministry, the delight of heaven in Him was such that it could not be contained. Could that Man have ought added to Him by what was external? No! Now at this moment

when His ministry is almost completed, again a voice is heard out of the cloud and you get heaven's idea of glory. The heavens attested His worth; the Father expressed His appreciation of His moral excellence. Here was an answering glory to His path of dark dishonour. He was transfigured, but the transfiguration added nothing personally to Him. We sometimes here of famous persons travelling incognito. I say it reverently in regard to the Lord; He had been travelling among men incognito. But He wishes to unveil what He is in Himself on that high mountain in the presence of those three disciples. His moral glory shines out. His garments are "shining, exceeding white as snow, such as fuller on earth could not whiten them" (Mark 9:3). Who is He? He is a Man absolutely for the pleasure of God. Heaven registers its testimony as to what glory is. The disciples saw it and they heard — "This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Mark 9:7). There is the Man you want to be in touch with, if you would know something about glory.

That is where Peter, that is where James and John, the sons of thunder, got their impression of glory. I believe that these men not only knew where the glory was but they hear from the lips of Jesus the way to it, for on the way to that mountain He indicated, for us, the way to it. Powerful language! He does not invite them to come that way. It is put in a far more touching and impressive way than that. He says, "If anyone will come after me" (Luke 9:23). To my heart that is stronger than an invitation. It is thrown open to you; does it appeal to you? "If anyone will come after me." What? "Let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

That appeal had not fallen on deaf ears; it had laid hold of the heart of the two sons of Zebedee. I can understand them coming to their mother and saying, 'Mother, we have received an impression of the glory and how it is to be reached. The path is clear before us. What do you think about it yourself?' Happily the light of it had reached their mother's heart too for, in another gospel where this same incident is recorded, we are told that it was their mother who brought her sons to Jesus.

I know some mothers who have a wonderful impression of the glory and the way it is to be reached. They would be quite happy for their sons to take the downward path that reaches to it but their sons are not content to go that way. On the other hand, I know some sons, and their hearts have been deeply imbued with the sense of moral glory, but the mothers are not content that the sons should go the way that leads to it. They would like them to be cultured, to be flattered, to be exalted, to be prominent in this world, but here was a mother and here were her sons in perfect correspondence of mind and heart in regard to glory. They come and she comes, and they say, "Teacher". Why "Teacher"? They had heard the Father's voice on the mountain say, "Hear him". "Teacher, we would that

whatsoever we may ask thee, thou wouldst do it for us” (Mark 10:35). He says, “What would ye that I should do for you?” They say, “Give to us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory”.

Why do they want to be so near to Him? They wanted to be morally near to Him, to be in moral correspondence with Him. He says, “Ye do not know what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup which I drink, or be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with? They say to him, We are able”. And they did; James was martyred, as we read in Acts 12. John, we are told, accepted martyrdom though he was delivered. They had counted the cost of the road to glory and they never took back what they said in faith.

I put it to you, does that way not appeal to you? It is the way the Lord went. You may go that way, too. May God encourage our hearts to take it. May He impress our hearts with what glory really is according to God.

Herbert Gill

Extracted from an address at Indianapolis, January 1916

THE DAY OF VISITATION

Isaiah 9: 1-2 & 6-7

Luke 1: 76-79

Luke 19: 43-44

I want to speak about the day of visitation. I want to tell you of the glory of the blessed Man who would visit us and I want you to understand that this visitation might be the very last. I hope that every one of our hearts is secretly prepared for a divine visitation now. For God, in the Person of Christ, would come so very near to us and give us to understand that He has nothing else in His heart for us but blessing. I want you to take advantage of this day of visitation.

Many years ago the firm that employed me fitted out nearly all of the concourse on Euston station and I was invited to see the opening of the station by the Queen. Her Majesty descended from the royal train. There were cheering crowds, bands, a red carpet and banks of flowers. Everything pointed to honourable respect for the Queen who graciously opened the new station. Why do I bring this into the gospel? Because the King of kings is coming into this very meeting tonight and His name is ‘Wonderful’! The hymn says:

‘A wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord,
A wonderful Saviour to me.’

I wonder if there is someone here who could not say that? If there is someone here whose heart has not been yielded to Christ may I speak to you sympathetically and feelingly? How do you feel about the issues of life? How are you getting

through life? What is the terminus that you have in mind? I remember someone starting a preaching by saying, 'Friends, I have found the secret of life!' Have you found the secret of life or are there times when you wonder what it is all about? Is there perhaps with you a tiny sense of need in that you do not know quite where you are going or what the terminus to which you are going may be? I believe there are many persons about like that and I say this sympathetically, because I have been in that state of soul myself. Those of us who love Christ would surround you with our prayers, because in one way or the other we have all been in the same situation as you are. We are all sinners. Yet many of us, thank God, have been saved by divine grace and we want that grace to be known by you tonight.

God in Christ has an intense interest in anyone here who has not yet trusted in the Saviour. He would draw near to you now in all the grace and charm of His person in order that your heart might be won for Christ. Let there be no mistake about it; our objective here is that your heart should be won for Christ. If there are those here who have not yet committed themselves to Him and to His interests we are concerned as to you.

Now this glorious heavenly Visitor is coming alongside of you, knocking at the very door of your heart. The bolts to that door are on the inside and if He is to be let in you have got to draw back the bolts. May you do so. If you have come into this hall tonight with any sense of need whatsoever you can take great comfort for that is the evidence that the Spirit of God has already begun to strive in your heart. I do not want you to defy the service of the Spirit.

Now, I want to speak of the way that the blessed Saviour has come into the lowly grace of manhood and in that manhood He has taken on these lovely names that we read about in Isaiah chapter 9.

Isaiah tells us, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder". Now we preach to you a Saviour who is prepared to take every one of your matters upon His shoulder. He is going to govern universally in a day to come. He wants to govern your life now. But He cannot do it, and I say this very reverently and soberly, if your will is exerted against His.

Once the disciples were looking at the stones in the temple and Jesus told them that a day was coming when all was going to be brought low. Now, if there is someone here without Christ, there is no point whatsoever in your trusting in this present world because it is all under judgement and it is all going to be brought down. But over against the overthrow of those mighty stones that they looked at, the Lord Jesus told them of a divine structure that was not going to be brought down. The corner-stone to that structure is one blessed Man. Jesus? Yes of course. But what does the Bible tell us in Mark His other name is? His name is

Wonderful. “This is of the Lord, and it is wonderful” (Mark 12:11). It is not the act that is wonderful, it is the stone that is wonderful.

This blessed Saviour is willing to come into that life of yours. You may be all worried and upset. You do not know where to go or what to do. My Saviour would like to come into your life and take charge of it from tonight onward.

Now, His other name is “Counsellor”. The Lord Jesus would be your Counsellor. He would guide you and bless you and, supposing you were called upon to die, He would be with you through the article of death as well. I sometimes ponder what it will be like when my spirit leaves my body. Perhaps I ought not to think of the article of death but I wonder what the experience will be like, what it will be like to move into the realm of divine glory, for that is where my spirit will be kept until the day of final rapture when the bodies of the saints will be raised. I ponder this. But all is well, because there will always be a blessed Man standing by. And that glorious Man, His name is ‘Wonderful’. He is the “Counsellor”. He is prepared to take charge of every one of our matters if only we will let Him, right through into the realm of glory.

Then He is the “Mighty God”. I see the Lord Jesus here in the lowly grace of manhood, serving in one way and the other, giving sight to the blind, healing the lame, freely handling the leper and so on. I am amazed that the Mighty God should stoop so low, to be revealed in Jesus.

I trust every one here has started off on the very bottom rung of the ladder of christian faith. What is it? I will tell you what the first rung is, “He that draws near to God must believe that he is” (Hebrews 11:6). All the combined brains in the world cannot understand naturally the words “he is”. Do you believe in God? Do you believe that this glorious, heavenly Person who would come alongside of you now is, as to His Person, God over all blessed for ever? That is the second step, if you like, in the ladder of christian experience to understand that the blessed Saviour, who was found in the lonely grace of manhood, ever remained the Mighty God.

Remember He is “Wonderful”, He is “Counsellor”, He is prepared to take charge of your life and see you right through your life until the day of glory. He is “Mighty God”. All power is given to Him in heaven and upon earth. Matthew closes his gospel by saying of Christ: “Lo, I am with you all the days” (Matthew 28:20).

Next, Isaiah tells us He is “Father of Eternity”. The eternal ages are before us and we shall be embraced in the blessedness of the Father’s eternal affection. All is bound up in the acceptance of Jesus as Saviour.

Then He is “Prince of Peace”! He can bring peace to the turmoil that is in your mind. 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.’

Whatever peace there may have been, whatever peace there was in the words of the prophets, whatever peace was suggested in the ministry of Jesus, or that of the twelve, He is the Prince of it all. He has brought something of the blessedness of that wondrous peace with Him and He would come alongside of you now.

What are you going to do? This is the day of visitation. It may be you have never had such an honoured guest knock at the door of your heart but you have got it tonight. The hymn writer says:

‘Sinner, see thy God beside thee,
In a Servant’s form come near,
Sitting, walking, talking with thee!
Sinai’s mount no longer fear.’

What does it mean? Well, it refers to the day that God spoke with His earthly people [Israel] when the mountain burned with fire and they could not approach. Only the mediator could approach. But now in all the grace and charm of His manhood the blessed Saviour, whose name is “Wonderful”, is coming alongside of you and telling you that if you will only yield your heart to Him you can have all the benefits of christianity.

Next, we come to: “Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end”. Where is that happening now? It is in the hearts of the millions of those that love Him. And it is being increased all the time. I have been delighted only last week to read of great gatherings in North and South Korea, where thousands are giving their hearts to Christ and it is a fact that the gospel is now being preached in many places where up to now it has been shut out. That is the increase of His government.

Are you going to accept Christ as Saviour now? He who went all the way to Calvary on your behalf was uplifted there on that cross, with nails through His hands and feet and a cruel crown of thorns upon His head. There He hung. The nails did not hold Him there. It was His love for you and me that held Him there.

Now, how can I get the blessing that God has in mind for me? Sometimes I come across people who want to know the answers to everything before they will even think of yielding their heart to Christ. Now that is a very foolish way of thinking. All the answers are in one blessed Man whose name is Wonderful. What then have you to do? Just in simple, child-like faith say to the Lord Jesus, as one of old did, “I believe, help mine unbelief”. Did He do it? Of course He did. What did He do with the unbelief? He cleared it right out of the way (see Mark 9:24).

I want someone here tonight to say to Jesus, for the first time ever, 'Lord Jesus, I believe. Become very wonderful to me. I have come to it, Lord, that I just cannot live my life without Thee'. It is an act of supreme folly to go out of this room without Christ.

I read from Luke's gospel just to confirm this. It says, "to give knowledge of deliverance to his people by the remission of their sins". Now I do not know how you feel about this question of sins. People do not like our use of the word 'sinner' and I have some times said to those who get uptight about the use of the word, 'Well, let us look at that verse (Romans 3:23) which says "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" the other way round'. "Come short of the glory of God" and "all have sinned". Could you possibly say that you have not come short of the glory of God? What is the glory of God? It is the Saviour, whose name is Wonderful. And if you admit, as you must do if you are honest, that you have come short of Christ then the next thing is you need a Saviour. And the Saviour is willing to come into your life tonight.

Then it says, "to give knowledge of deliverance to his people by the remission of their sins on account of the bowels of mercy of our God". We thought a moment ago of the mighty transaction that was carried out at Calvary when, after He had suffered at the hands of men in the most awful of ways, the scene is darkened and all that God is against sin is visited on the Saviour's blessed head. "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Is any one here now going to doubt that they are a sinner? Do not think we are calling you a name, because we are not. We are just stating the fact from the Bible. We have all been there, but most of us in this hall, perhaps all of us, are sinners saved by divine grace, thank God.

My Saviour exhausted the judgement and delivered up His spirit. A soldier with a spear pierced His side and there poured out blood and water. The hymn says:

'Thousands have fled to His spear-pierced side;
Welcome they all have been, none are denied.'

Is that true of you? Are you going to flee to Jesus' spear-pierced side in this the day, the moment, of your visitation?

The passage we read speaks of the greatness of the "mercy of our God". Did you think that nobody was interested in you? Well, I want to tell you tonight that all heaven is interested in you! God is supremely interested in you. He wants to secure you for Christ now.

So it says: "wherein the dayspring from on high has visited us". Not only is it the appeal of a Saviour who has trodden a lonely pathway that led Him to Calvary on your behalf but an appeal to you from glory! Do you remember the account of

those people who “sent an embassy after him, saying, We will not that this man should reign over us” (see Luke 19:14). In the passage the Lord Jesus is really teaching that He would be going away into the glory and there would be those who, in the time of His being away, would reject Him. So, where did those who said that they would not have Him to reign over them send their message? They sent the message to glory! What a terrible thing! What message are you going to send to glory tonight?

The Dayspring from on high has visited us. The light of another world altogether has come to us and He brings all the environment of that world to, as it were, embrace you now. My dear friend, this is your opportunity, this is your moment.

I am going to close in a few minutes. We are then going to sing a hymn and we are then going to pray. We are going to pray that God might bless the meeting and that you might be blessed. As we pray there will be an atmosphere provided (for we are all going to pray for you) in which it will be easy for you to yield your heart to Christ. But remember this. If you go out of this hall without Christ, you have been warned. The Bible tells us that God says, “and warn them from me” (Ezekiel 33:7). As you stand at the cross-roads of decision tonight you can go one way, to blessing, or the other way, to the condemnation of hell. The choice is yours. I appeal to you to yield your heart to the Saviour. Yield your heart to Christ; allow Him to guide your feet into “the way of peace”.

Do you realise that those of us who love Christ, we are off any minute now? For the Lord Himself will come with an assembling shout and call all His own to be with Him for ever. For those that are left behind there will be no second chance. “In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be” (Ecclesiastes 11:3). The Spirit of God, I believe, would enter into an appeal now that someone might yield his or her heart to Christ.

Now I close with a warning based on history and I go just for a moment to chapter 19 of Luke. It says that Jesus drew near to Jerusalem and He wept over it. But there were those who would not yield their hearts to Jesus and He told them that their city was going to be overthrown. That happened forty years later. In other words, He gave them space for repentance, as He has given you space for repentance, but they would not repent.

The city was overthrown and over one million persons lost their lives. The city was razed to the ground. Why? Because they did not know the season of their visitation. Now you know yours, and may you have no rest until you accept the Visitor, for His name’s sake.

Ron Gregory, Hampton, 7th June 1992

(This article has been revised, but not by Mr Gregory himself.)