

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 266

May 1995

Contents

MEASUREMENT

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

MORE THAN SOLOMON

MEASUREMENT

Edwin Mutton

Revelation 11: 1

I suppose the idea of measurement is what distinguishes time from eternity. God has brought in the idea of measurement because our finite minds cannot grasp what is unmeasurable. They have difficulty in thinking about eternity, something that does not have an end, where ageing and time have no place. And God has created time, which in itself is measured. God has arranged things in creation and we measure time by what is created. The year is the period of time that the earth takes to travel round the sun. The month is linked with the way the moon rises and sets. The day is a measurement that is governed by what is created. God indicated the measurement of a week which is not related to what is natural but is something God saw that man needed for rest from his labours every seventh day.

God has brought in other measurements too. In fact, our lives are marked by measurement. What we buy in the shops is usually measured. We can buy large packets or small packets, or material or wood, anything like this is measured. Sizes of shoes and dresses, everything we have to do with is measured. The first thing they do when we are born is to weigh us; the last thing is to measure a man to make his coffin. Measurement touches us all the way through our lives.

And God uses it in the scriptures. He gives us measurements. It is interesting, as you go through Scripture, to see that measurement that has to do with God's operations has just that touch of infinity about it. When the Lord comes, it says, He will come and we will be raptured "in the twinkling of an eye", 1 Cor 15: 52. In one sense, that is a finite measurement: "the twinkling of an eye", but it is very difficult to measure. How fast, how long is "the twinkling of an eye"? That is something that God will do and to us it is almost infinite, it has just that touch of what is divine. You think about creation and the measurements that men use: light years. They can

be calculated. People can say how many light years away the nearest star is, but it is almost an infinite concept for us.

There is always that touch in Scripture when measurements have to do with God that there is something beyond measurement.

God Himself cannot be measured. In the Old Testament, as to the Lord Jesus in type, we get that interesting reference to the ark, the half-measure, but while it was an actual measurement that men could make, that half-measurement suggests there is something that is greater than men can compass. Later we get another measurement: as the ark goes through Jordan, there were two thousand cubits between the ark and the people. There is something about divine things is always beyond us.

But God teaches us by measurement and I would like to apply this scripture because the gospel is something that measures us.

The gospel comes to us, and God says, I want you to measure yourself by what is presented to you in the gospel. We sang in our hymn that "All men have sinned and short of glory come" (Hymn 275) That line is taken from Romans 3: 23 – "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". God has a measurement, His glory, and we have come short of it: we do not measure up to the standard. There are certain children's rides on Walton Pier, and by them there is a notice: 'If you are not as high as this picture, you cannot come on this ride'. And in the gospel, according to Romans 3: 23, there is a measurement: "the glory of God". God would say, if you want to know Me and to be at home in My presence, and you do not come up to this standard, then you have come short. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". (You young people remember that next time you walk down the pier and see that notice!) God has a standard and no man has reached that standard but Jesus alone.

Thank God that that is not the end of the story! Thank God that He has made a way whereby His standard - the Lord Jesus Himself - that standard can be put to your account and mine. We are taken into favour, we are brought into the presence of God in the worth of the One who is God's glory.

But the gospel has in mind that you and I measure ourselves. And here in Revelation 11 John was given a measure and told to go and measure certain things. I would like to apply this scripture; it is not, literally, its interpretation. It applies to a day that is yet to come. But these three things are very important for us to measure - the temple, the altar and them that worship in it.

First "measure the temple of God". The word of God comes to us to give us some impression of the greatness of the things that God has prepared for men. Whether we can measure them or not is another question, but God would say to us in His word, This is My proposition to you. I would like you to sit and consider it. To sit down and measure something, takes time and deliberation. You cannot easily measure something at a distance. God says I want you to get close to the temple of God. I want you to see the things that I have prepared for those that love Me. God has prepared blessing, an eternity of bliss. God has prepared things that have not entered into the heart of man for those that love Him as an alternative to what men have.

What have you, dear friend, to look forward to without God? If you take God out of your consideration and out of your life - even if we know the Lord Jesus and know God - if you take the things of God - the things that belong to God, the truth of the gospel, the truth of the Lord Jesus and the work that He has done - out of your life, what have you? What has man, those who know not our Lord Jesus Christ? Paul tells us: he speaks of those who are without hope and without God in the world. What a position to be in! Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 15, "If in this life only we have hope..., we are the most miserable of all men", v 19. Go down on the beach: there are plenty of people who do not know God and do not think the Lord's Day is any different from any other day and they seem very happy. Are they? Can a man be happy without having peace with God, without having a link with the Lord Jesus? Do you think you can be happy without a link with the Lord Jesus? What have you, dear friend?

What can you say you actually have by way of permanent lasting peace and enjoyment outside of God? I can tell you because the

scripture tells us: you have nothing. If you have not the Lord Jesus in your heart as your own personal Saviour, if you do not know peace with God, if you do not know that your sins are forgiven, if you have not measured the temple of God and seen the great things that God has for you in the gospel, you have nothing.

That is a lesson we all have to learn and keep on learning because sometimes we think we have something. We think we have ability. We think we can get to the top of the tree, make our way in the world. God can take that all from you. There have been those that have reached right to the top of their chosen career or chosen sport, and God has put His hand on them and touched them. Job was a man like that. He had everything and God touched him in every part of his life. Sometimes God does that to us, touches us just to remind us that without Him we have and are nothing. God in whose hand our breath is: God can take that breath away at any moment. None of us can boast of tomorrow. That should keep us very humble in the presence of God, very dependent, but it should also give us to value the greatness of the temple of God, the greatness of the things that God has. This temple here is the actual building, the centre of the temple, because it goes on to speak of "the court which is without the temple cast out, and measure it not", v 2. This is the very shrine, this is the innermost thought of what God has for men and, dear friend, without it, you and I have nothing.

Therefore, we should measure these things and see how much part of our lives they are. If the things of God are the only things worth having, how much time, how much energy do I devote to them? Or is my time and energy devoted to that which really is only building up a line that is going to end in death and the grave?

This is a challenge to every heart. If you do not know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, it should be a very real challenge to you because you are going on, dear friend, to destruction. Oh, you say, that is a bit old-fashioned. That is very basic, fundamentalist Protestantism. It may be but it is also the truth of God. There are only two ways: there is a broad way that leads to destruction and a narrow way that leads to life, and the trouble is that you and I would

like the broad path to lead to life. But it does not. The broad path leads to destruction: "the end thereof is the ways of death", Prov 14: 12. But the narrow way leads to life. There are not many on it; most are on the broad way. How sad that is! All those people enjoying themselves on the beach and many of them, no doubt, on the broad way that leads to destruction, not only not knowing it, but not really caring about it. God can speak to them. God does speak to them. Every man, woman and child, I believe God gives them opportunity. He speaks to them in their lives, circumstantially, something they hear or read, even by means that perhaps you or I would not fully approve, maybe a word or programme on radio or television. God can use that to speak to the hearts of men. Thank God for what goes on, even in the way of the mass media - faithful men and women who are prepared to deliver the truth and speak a word about the Lord Jesus in simplicity and faithfulness. But He is speaking to you and me and what He is saying is "measure the temple", measure and see what I have for you, and how much I have in store for you and how much I want you to be with Me and with Me eternally, to see this great, wonderful edifice, the "things ... which God has prepared for them that love him", 1 Cor 2: 9. I do not think you could measure it fully. None of us knows anything yet as we ought and if you read later in this book of the holy city and see the measurements there, something like twelve hundred miles vertically and horizontally, although it is finite it is almost beyond our comprehension. That is the kind of thing in which God wants you and me to find our eternal part; happiness now in time, but everlasting joy throughout eternity. Let us have some increased apprehension of the temple of God.

I want to come now to: "measure ... the altar". I think this would relate to the work and the Person of the Lord Jesus. He was the altar and the sacrifice, but I think it is a very touching matter to measure the altar, to have some fresh apprehension in the gospel of where the Lord Jesus went, the depths to which He went. Again, because it has to do with One who is divine, it cannot be measured in its fulness. "None could follow there, blest Saviour", the hymn

says. The same hymn says, "Thou didst measure then sin's distance" (Hymn 298). You cannot do that. I cannot do that. None of us can measure the awfulness of the distance that sin has brought in between man and God. Even light years would not measure the distance that sin has brought in between man and God. But there is one Man who has measured it. He was the sacrifice and the altar.

Dear friend, have you measured the altar? Have you ever sat down and thought what the death of Jesus meant to God, what it means to you, what it means for everybody? Have you ever sat down prayerfully and read on your own the accounts in the gospels of the death of the Lord Jesus? We need to measure these things deliberately. God says to you in the preaching, "Come now, let us reason together", Isa 1: 18. Let us think about these things! This is a very profound reference, "measure ... the altar", see the way that the Lord Jesus went, tasted death for everything. There is not a sin that has been committed in time that the Lord Jesus did not bear, for which He did not suffer and exhaust God's judgment. He is a propitiation for the whole world (see 1 John 3: 1). There have been some heinous crimes, deadly sins, black sins. Oh, you say, that lets me out. I have not done these wicked things. I have never murdered anyone. Perhaps I have never stolen anything. I have never done these wicked things. One sin would keep you from the presence of God for eternity. If you were the only sinner on the earth and if you had only committed one sin, if you were to have entry into the presence of God, the Lord Jesus had to die. It may not be a very grievous one, but one sin would keep you out of the presence of God for ever because God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil", Hab 1: 13. Think of that! We have to do with a God who cannot even look upon sin. And you think of this altar. Think of the Lord Jesus, the One whom we remembered this morning, the One who went into death, laid down His life, shed His blood, exhausted God's judgment against sin. We do not come into the blessings of Christianity without the price being paid. The price has been paid in full. Thank God the gospel says that you and I have not to pay the price. It has been paid. God's judgment against sin has been borne and exhausted by the Lord Jesus. "Measure ... the altar!" Have a fresh

look, dear friend, at the Person of the Lord Jesus! Have a fresh appreciation of the depths to which He went! You will not be able to fathom it. But here this man was given this reed like a staff and, told, "Rise, ... measure ... the altar". Let the word of God just come to you afresh! Have another look, dear friend, believer and unbeliever alike, at what the death of the Lord Jesus involved. How deep He went, how far He went! As that hymn says, referring to Luke 15:

'But none of the ransom'd ever knew
How deep were the waters cross'd
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.'

Think of the shepherd going after that lost sheep "until he find it", Luke 15: 4. How far was that? How far has the Lord Jesus had to go for you? How far did He have to go for me until He found me? How far away were we from God? Yet He went until He found us. Every blood-bought saint will be able to say that that the Lord Jesus went after them until He found them. It says in relation to some in Luke that He would have gone further. We would have to say that the Lord Jesus has gone further for us than any of us have ever gone in disobedience and sin, because He has measured the extremity of sin's distance, However far you have been away from God, however bad you have been, however wicked your sins have been, the Lord Jesus has gone further because He has been to the bottoms of the mountains (Jonah 2: 6). "Measure ... the altar!" Contemplate the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus, the alone Saviour for sinners, the only one that can give you entrance into this wonderful realm of the temple of God! There is only one way. There is only one gate. The Lord Jesus said that: "I am the way ...", John 14: 6. There is no other way into the blessings of God. Comparative religion? No! None of that will do. There is only one way. There is only one person. The Lord Jesus is beyond compare. There is much talk these days about different ways of finding God and arriving at salvation. There is only one way. There is only one gate and that is faith in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus; the only way of blessing: "... for neither is there another name under

heaven which is given among men", Acts 4: 12. Whatever names there may be, there is only one "name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved". That is God saying: Measure this! Most of us can count to one. The scripture says there is only *one* way. God has made it so simple. If there were a multiplicity of ways, I would be able to say my way is better than yours or my way is easier than yours. This is what politicians say, Our way is better than yours: this way will not work: this way is such-and-such and this way is something else. No! God says there is only one way. God has made things simple. Even if you cannot count beyond one, you can come into the blessing of the gospel because there is only one way for blessing. Dear friend, let us "measure ... the altar".

Now we come to the testing one: "measure ... them that worship in it". This is measuring you and me. As I said at the beginning, God tells us in His word that we have all come short.

How do you measure up to the word of God? How do you measure against the glory of God? We come short. God says He is able to make you to stand. Have you ever measured yourself? Have you ever been able to say that by putting your faith and trust in the Lord Jesus all the worth of that blessed One is put to your account so that you can stand before God? "Measure ... them that worship in it".

See those men in the Old Testament - "Each one resembled the sons of a king", Jud 8: 18. That is what a believer is. That is what a blood-bought saint is. "Measure ... them that worship in it". How do you stand before God? Do you still come short because your faith is not in the Lord Jesus or have you put your faith in the Lord Jesus and can say that God has made you to stand, made you a prince?

That is what believers are. As Mr Lyon used to say: heaven's aristocracy! A few weeks ago we buried a brother in Redbridge, who was a road-sweeper. I often used to see him out and about sweeping the gutters and the pavements. I used to think of that remark when I saw him sweeping the streets. Men would drive by in their Rolls Royces and Mercedes. There was a man who was part of heaven's aristocracy. Nothing in this world! No! Some of us may

strive to get a better place, maybe. But you need no better place than God can give you. Measure the worshippers! God can make you to be one of heaven's aristocracy, a son of God. What greater privilege could you have? You have a link as you come into the joy of the gospel with the King of kings and the Lord of lords. You have a line of communication, a direct line to the very seat of power, help and grace in the universe. A Man ascended far above all heavens and filling all things. Now let us measure ourselves, "them that worship in it".

There is just one thing more before I finish. It would be a good exercise if we put this into practice locally and measured "them that worship in it". It would give us to value our local brethren, value all our brethren, value anyone with whom we have a link in the things of God. Perhaps we have not done that. Perhaps you write some off or write some down. I think it would be very good if we kept this reed like a staff and started to measure "them that worship in it". We might get some surprises. You might find some hidden treasures, some hidden stature in a brother or a sister that you had not seen before. Go round your local meeting. Go round your local area. Go round your Christian friends. The gospel would give you this positive view of all God's people.

May the challenge of this verse in Revelation remain with us all, for the Lord's names sake.

WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

17 July 1994

LIGHT IN DARKNESS

Peter Mutton

John 1: 1-11; Matthew 17: 1-8; Acts 26: 1,2, 11-19; Revelation 21: 21-24

The Scriptures start pretty much in the same way that John begins his gospel. The Bible starts with a condition, a world, in which darkness prevailed. God's creation of the world would in itself have been perfect but something had happened in that opening clause of the book of Genesis which had turned the whole vista into one of darkness: "darkness was on the face of the deep", and the Spirit of God is recorded as "hovering over the face of the waters", Gen 1: 2, that is, there was nothing with which God could communicate or commune upon the earth. The whole thing was under a blanket of darkness, a pall of darkness. John begins his gospel with a world as plunged into a night time of darkness, moral darkness. Even in the very place where God had set His mark and His promise, there was darkness and moral decay. There were a few lights, a few saints, "awaiting the consolation of Israel", a few true souls to whom God could communicate His mind and they were there waiting and ready for the birth of Jesus. But they were only a few. When God wanted a regal and a royal testimony as to who His Son was, He sent to the east for the magi. When He wanted some men who would take a lively interest in the birth of His Son, He had to go out to the fields to find some shepherds. There were a few, but they were precious to God. Malachi speaks of the few that feared Jehovah, that "thought upon His name", (Mal 3: 16) and God has them written into a book of remembrance. God has those with whom He can communicate His mind and who commune with Himself, the spiritual. There is a lot to think about, a lot in scripture, that bears examination, but what a challenge for man, because in the time in which we are God has shone out so powerfully in the Person of His Son. The glory of God has shone out in the face of a Man, in the face of Jesus. And yet Isaiah says, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?" Isa 53: 1. There were very few.

He says "we esteemed him not"; we did not give Him a place. And do you know, beloved brother, beloved sister, beloved young person, much is unchanged in the world. No place is given to Christ. You will not find Him in business. You will find a dearth of moral and Christian principles in business. It has been said that the further up you get in this world, the nearer you get to the god of it - and that is not Jesus. The prince of this world is Satan, the great deceiver of men. People think they are living in good times, times of prosperity, certainly in the western world. But God has a very different view and John writing here says, "And the light appears in darkness".

Matthew, quoting Isaiah, describes the light springing up in the place of darkness, "in the country and shadow of death" (Matt 4: 16). But there was no answer. I wonder if we have answered to the light in Christ. I wonder if you have seen it, glimpsed it. How do you see Him? You need a single eye to see the light of Jesus. That is to say you have to fasten your eye on Jesus to the exclusion of everything else. John says, "and we have contemplated his glory", chap 1: 14.

John sat and looked at Jesus and what did he see? He saw something that was to burn into his soul, into his heart. Jesus was revealed in him. He became alive in the presence of Jesus, just as did Peter and James and the other disciples. Some went away backwards, those who had not taken time to contemplate and comprehend who was here went away back, and Jesus said to His disciples, "Will ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal", John 6: 67,68. He could not think of going anywhere else because the light had shone into his heart.

How important it is that we come to the light and that we are affected by it. We sometimes speak about light in a doctrinal way and it is dangerous. I have light as to this scripture or that one, but the truth is in Jesus. He is the One of whom we speak. If we speak about the light of the truth, it is only meaningful so long as it refers to Himself. Remember those two who went gloomily back to Emmaus and Jesus joined them and spoke to them, and their hearts began to burn? "And having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, he

interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself", Luke 24: 27. The scriptures can become a dead letter.

The only thing that makes them meaningful is when you have a glimpse of a Person who is the "light of the world" (John 8: 12).

We read about Paul again, Saul of Tarsus. What a dreadful man he was! He speaks of himself, "an insolent overbearing man", 1 Tim 1: 13, and he said, "I indeed myself thought that I ought to do much against the name of Jesus the Nazaraean", Acts 26: 9, and here he is at his defence. Where did it lead him, his devotion to Jesus? It led him to the dock and he was in chains. Oh, but he loved the opportunity. King Agrippa said, 'You can start now, Paul'. "It is permitted thee to speak ...". And he stretched out his hand and he said, "I count myself happy". Was he happy on the road to Damascus? No! He was miserable! He had been kicking against the Christian, kicking against the name of Jesus and every time he stubbed his toe because he was kicking against a rock that God had set, an immovable obstacle, a stone of stumbling ... a rock of offence to the Pharisee: you cannot change it. Daniel, you will remember, speaks about a stone cut out without hands and it smashed the whole of the edifice of the civilised world. It all becomes as nothing before Jesus. "The stone which the builders cast away as worthless, this is become head of the corner", 1 Pet 2: 7.

Here we have Saul of Tarsus in his fury and rage. The more he trampled on the name of Christ, the more it was in evidence, and here he is at Damascus, consumed with zeal and passion against the very One whom God has set for all time and for eternity. I love this passage because Paul who is given to speaking at great length and at great speed, without commas, paragraphs, full stops, starts to 'wind down' as he relives this experience. And he says "And when, engaged in this, I was journeying to Damascus, with authority and power from the chief priests, at mid-day, on the way, I saw, O king ..." - you can just see him looking up as it all came back to him - "a light above the brightness of the sun, shining from heaven round about me". Mid-day, on the way, oh, dear friend, it is essential that we

know something of the outshining of this Man, Jesus. We may not have had this experience on the road to Damascus that Paul had.

Your conversion to Christ may not be so dramatic but there must be one. Saul as far as the pharisaical mind was concerned was perfect. He had not transgressed the law. In everything he was blameless.

If you were to look at chapter and verse for Saul of Tarsus he would get an 'A' in every category. Had he not sat at the feet of Gamaliel?

Was he not destined for great things as a Pharisee of the Pharisees? Had he not a great career because of his zeal and doubtless his charisma and his power? But suddenly there shone on the way, at mid-day, a light above the brightness of the sun, and everything slowed down for Saul of Tarsus into a moment of time.

He came up against that immovable object that was bigger than he was. Dear friend, I do not know what you are like, but if there is hope for Saul of Tarsus, there is hope for you. You too can become a spiritual person, a person devoted to the Lord and to His service, a man that can be happy in the dock, happy in prison, happy in chains, because he has found something that is *out* of this world that empowered him to live in it. He was one to whom the arm of Jehovah had been revealed. Where does he find himself? He finds himself on the dusty desert road on his knees before a God who was so great, so omnipotent, and yet in the Person of His Son was taking time to speak to him in grace. "It is hard for thee to kick against goads". "*I am Jesus whom thou persecutest*". Well, may we cry to the Lord! If we have not had this experience in our souls, we need to get on our knees, we need to look with a single eye that we might have light in our vessels, a single eye of contemplation, of desire, fixed on Jesus.

There are many of whom we can speak in this context. Mary of Bethany was one such, a single eye for Jesus as she sat at His feet and heard His word. She was there drinking in what He had to say, and that, I believe, is the first step, just to listen. You say, I have never had an experience with the Lord. He has never spoken to me. But have you bothered to listen? Saul of Tarsus had never listened. He had read the prophets and they had gone straight over his head

and suddenly he is confronted by someone that he had to listen to: "Who are thou, Lord? ... I am Jesus whom thou persecutest". And where may I see you, Lord? You have seen me in my saints. They are Mine. I am identified with them and I want to be, Saul, identified with you. I want you to identify with me. And he takes him up and stands him on his feet and sends him. There he goes, led by the hand, into Damascus to await God's time. There we have an example of a man who saw the light that is radiant in the face of a Man, the face of Jesus. How attractively God has resented Himself to us, in His Son, that lowly gracious Man who went about doing good! Did He turn away those who came in their need? No! He was there always ready and available for those in need, but above all He wanted them to know the Father and the love of God.

We read too in Matthew of a glimpse that the disciples, Peter and James and John, had of the Lord. I am sure they were somewhat confused at this time and we must remember that John wrote *his* account many years after this event. His impression of Christ became developed with time, contemplative time, much of it spent in isolation in Patmos, John's gospel probably being the last book written in the scriptures. But here Peter was still, you might say, an unpolished stone, not set in its final setting. And Peter was always, perhaps, that rough diamond that the Lord esteemed and yet some of us maybe look on and say, Well, why Peter? Surely there was somebody a bit more responsible, a bit more trustworthy. Oh, thank God, the Lord has taken up those who were not naturally trustworthy, those who spoke before they had really engaged their minds, their thoughts. He has taken up people like you and me and he has set us together. He has taken up those who were in the dung-hill and He has set us among princes. What a princely company, not because of anything we were, but because of what He has desires. If we are anything in the things of God,

It is His work, His workmanship that is going to shine. And so here we have these three and the Lord has taken them, has singled them out for a distinctive impression of Himself "into a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them. And his face shone as

the sun, and his garment became white as the light". For a moment they glimpsed something of the glory of Jesus. When we see Him, I am sure we shall see this, the light, the light of God in the face of a Man, His face there radiant. What joy to behold the face of Jesus!

Not a Man of sorrow or suffering, not a Man amongst men bearing their weight or bearing their guilt as He did ultimately, not bearing their pain as He did throughout His life, but to see a Man there in the realm which belonged to Him, and these three men were privileged to see it. May we as looking away to Jesus with that single eye have some sense of Him now in His glory, sat down on the Father's throne, all things ordered and waiting the full end of time! This dark moral morass that surrounds us is only for a time. It will not continue. The time is set when it will all be done away. The great institutions of men will be dissolved. Finally what will be seen will be Jesus alone. The great Saviour of mankind will be seen as the Saviour of the world practically. But here they have a glimpse of Him and yet, again, instead of the single eye, they, especially Peter, became distracted. They started to think about what they should do. Oh, 'we are privileged to be here!' Let us make three tabernacles: one for Moses, one for Elias, but, Lord, of course, first, one for yourself! "Such a voice", they heard, Peter writes later, "uttered ... by the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son", 2 Pet 1: 17. What do we think of Him? Do we think of Him at all? Do we give Him any place? because God has given Him the very first place. Do not compare Him with Moses and Elias! Do not compare Him with Paul or Apollos or Cephas! He is beyond compare and we must needs contemplate Him and who He is. And so, here again, there is the casting down, "And the disciples hearing it fell upon their faces, and were greatly terrified". How often our impulses to do something for Him get in the way of what He is trying to do in us and for us. In an attempt to get hold and grasp our privileges, we miss the privilege!

There is no detailed record of what Moses and Elias said. It is almost as though they were not ready for it, were not in a condition to receive these remarkable words that were uttered on the mountain. First, before we can receive any communication from God, we must feast our eyes on the One whom God has set for the

fall, but for the rising up of many. And so these men fell there on their faces. They heard the voice, but the wonder and the grace of it that "Jesus coming to them touched them, and said, Rise up, and be not terrified. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus alone". He is always there for us, the great Mediator, the great Intercessor, the One there with His hand upon the throne, the throne of God. He can sit upon it. He can speak for you, and He does! There is one who accuses, but here is one who defends. And God always listens to Him. And here He is, Jesus alone with themselves. What a comfort to know that the Lord Jesus is on our side, indeed, as God is Himself, but we see Him, we see there the face of a Man, and it is set towards us in grace, but the heart of God is behind it.

I just wanted to read in the book of the Revelation chapter 21 to see the end of the matter in verse 23. We have here the detail of the bride, the Lamb's wife, the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God, and when we get to verse 23, "And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it; for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory to it". Wonderful thing! No need of the sun or of the moon. We are in transitional times. The sun and the moon are indicative of that.

There is the day: God has divided between the light and the darkness. In fact, in a physical way, just as He is dividing in time between the moral darkness and the light which is in Christ for us, God has given the symbols of it in the sky and we are reminded, I suppose, inevitably, of what happened at Calvary when suddenly the light went. God withheld His light for three hours. There was no relief during those three hours for the One upon whom God had settled the first place. There communion was severed. No man looked on at Him, and it is as though God looks on no man and turns away from the earth. What a terrible thing! a darkness, I am sure, which was like that which was felt in Egypt during the plagues, a darkness that could be felt. But that time is over. God now has a basis whereby He can come out in wondrous grace and blessing to

men. But we too must distinguish between what is light and what is darkness. "The Father of lights" is One in whom there is no darkness, no "shadow of turning", Jas 1: 17, and we must feast our eyes on the standard of light that He has set forth in Jesus.

May we be encouraged in this. Let us not look anywhere else for satisfaction! There is nowhere else where we shall find satisfaction which lasts, it is found alone in Christ and He belongs to another world, another realm. The three disciples saw it for a moment, but we all shall see Him. We shall all be caught up to Him in the cloud and we shall see His glory. May the Lord hasten that time for His Name's sake!

KIRKCALDY

4 February 1995

MORE THAN SOLOMON

Geoffrey Bailey

1 Kings 10: 1-6; 8,9; 2 Corinthians 12: 1-5

I am sure the events of this week [January 1994] would draw us together in bonds of affection as our hearts are moved by the way the Lord is exercising His prerogative in relation to one and another and particularly in relation to our beloved brother now with Him.

I think the weekly occasion for ministry was one when we could always rely upon him to give a touch to our hearts and we have to proceed now as it were, in new circumstances - not that any individual, of course, is indispensable for we have the Lord and He moves amongst His people and gives the word. I think those here will know what is meant when I say that we are entering a new arrangement of things without one who has been with us for so long, so that such occasions perhaps will be different from what has been before, an occasion where a simple impression which comes to us has to be brought forward and perhaps the simpler the better, because what does come to us is not of natural ability, nor natural thought but some touch, very often imparted at the Supper. Just a word, just a thought which is given expression to, and which we hold on to, which may not seem much at the time but which I think we find in experience of growing with us into something more definite.

I thought of this scripture particularly because it referred to the fame of Solomon whom, though very great, speaks to our affections of our Lord Jesus, as Jesus says "more than Solomon is here", Matt 12: 42. The fame of Solomon was something which exceedingly surpassed anything else in that day. It must have been a most magnificent and regal arrangement that Solomon ruled over, such that it attracted this person, the Queen of Sheba, to behold it for herself. The fame of the Lord Jesus is something which will fill the day to come. We sometimes say it must fill all the earth, but it is a fame too that will fill heaven, and indeed it does.

Solomon was but a foreshadowing of all that would be and what an arrangement it was, a house, and food and servants and the order, including cupbearers. What an arrangement of perfection and this Queen comes to see it for herself, and she is impressed. I think that we shall be impressed beyond measure when we see the Lord Jesus Himself. There is no doubt that it will far exceed anything known here, far exceed anything that is related for us in this passage. But the fame of Solomon was such that the scripture gives some indication as to the features which marked that fame, Solomon's wisdom. Think of the knowledge that he had and how it impressed the people. The child, how it was brought to him, it says - All Israel heard and they understood that God had given Solomon wisdom (see 1 Kings 3: 27,28). Then the house that he had built, and the food at his table, the excellence that entered into all that with which he surrounded himself.

Then it speaks about the department of his servants and the order of service and that seems to feature very largely in the impression that the queen of Sheba could see, because she says "Happy are thy men! happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, who hear thy wisdom!". I think that we should represent something of this ability to rise above the sorrows of the pathway, real as they are. I do not minimise them at all but there is resource with the believer - we often quote the scripture that "ye be not grieved even as also the rest who have no hope". What do we have if it is not the happiness secure for us in the glory, in the excellence of what He sets on? "Happy are these thy servants who stand continually before thee, who hear thy wisdom", so that in the midst of sorrow we can rejoice in what has been secured, because we know that as absent they are with the Lord; such persons are absent from the body, but immediately present with the Lord. What a wonderful prospect that is and how it has energised saints through the ages. That in itself is sufficient to bring in the happiness which we can proceed in, in a world which is marked by depravity and declining standards, all that line of things, but there is elevation here. It speaks of the ascent by which they went up. How attractive it is

and how it should move us in relation to our outlook and our appreciation of what is laid up in store.

These passages of course describe for us an earthly scene and go on in result to blessing Jehovah "who delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel! Because Jehovah loves Israel for ever". God loves His people, He loves them still and God, as we know, sympathises; there are priestly sympathies. How thankful we should be to have such a provision.

I read this passage in Corinthians because I think it bears, in my mind at least, some comparison with what we have read in Kings. The apostle was speaking of an experience which he had had and he was relating it to these saints in Corinth and he is speaking of conditions which are not suitable for this earthly scene, not suitable for our present condition. He evidently had seen and experienced something of the greatness and glory of Christ and it characterised his whole ministry. We have some idea of scenes and conditions of suffering, but he "heard unspeakable things said which it is not allowed to man to utter", not suitable to this world and our mortal condition. It gives us some indication, I believe, that there is that which is before us which far exceeds anything of Solomonic glory; it is that which is laid up in the heavens, which is prepared for us, prepared for us by none other than the Christ Himself.

I just thought that the fame of Solomon would give us some lead into the excellencies of the Christ in the scene where He is and where Paul would lead us on to in this experience that he relates and it might lift our hearts and cause us to be, in a measure, comforted and rejoicing. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

18 January 1994