

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE MOUNTAIN OF GOD

Genesis 22; Exodus 3: 1, 4: 27; 1 Kings 19: 5-9

P.v d B. It is very affecting to see typically in Genesis 22 the way God has taken in giving His own Son in view of securing what His love has purposed. I thought we might get a touch of the way the Father and the Son have moved together and of how God has provided in view of the testimony today, as it says, "On the mount of Jehovah will be provided", v 14. In Exodus 3, Moses is tending the flock: he came to the mountain of God where God reveals Himself, and we get the ground on which God will be served in the light in which He revealed Himself. In chapter 4 we have the brotherly relations between Moses and Aaron, where Aaron kisses Moses on the mountain of God. In 1 Kings 19, we have Elijah at a time when he was disappointed after the way in which he had been distinctly helped in his service. The rights of God had been vindicated in a very difficult time and God provided for Elijah in giving him the food that enabled him to go the forty days to Horeb, the mountain of God. We can count on God that He will see the testimony through. He has provided for it in the gift of His own Son and in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The mountain of God is the level on which the testimony is to be continued. The recovery that God has given at the end of this dispensation was in view of the assembly, the house of God, where the presence of God is known. The ministry of John is God's provision for our day and we get deep touches there as to the way the Father and the Son moved together in view of God's purpose being secured, as well as the conditions in these last days in which we are, where things are small, but they are not too small for God. He will provide to see the testimony through in the day of small things.

W.F. Would what is said in verse 2, "thine only son" be connected with "the only-begotten Son" in the new Testament?

P.v d B. Yes. The Father and the Son are seen moving together in John's gospel in relation to the burnt-offering.

W.F. Would the Father and the Son going together refer to the time between the Lord being sent at the Jordan until He was on the cross?

P.v d B. Yes; the Lord was sent when the Holy Spirit came upon Him. John says "we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father", ch 1: 14.

D.R. Do you think we need to have an impression of the way in which God has accomplished His purpose? "Ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain", Acts 2: 23. There is no suggestion of the hands of lawless men in this chapter. It says in verse 6 "Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it on Isaac his son", and he took the knife-the knife is in the hand of the father. Does it give some idea, as you have suggested, of the way God has accomplished His purpose?

P.v d B. Yes; the purpose of God comes on to view in chapters 22 and 24 in connection with the light in which God was going to come out in the fulness of the time in the revelation of Himself in the Father and the Son and (in chapter 24) the Holy Spirit, in view of the assembly.

D.B. What would these two young men in verse 3 represent to us?

P.v d B. They were with Abraham and Isaac as far as they could go but there came a point where they could go no further. There came a point where the Lord had to go alone, as the hymn says 'None could follow there, blest Saviour'. He went into death alone. The crowds had left Him, the disciples had left Him, and as our brother said there was the knife. Paul says "He, who, yea, has not spared His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things, Rom 8: 32. How richly God has provided on that basis!

D.B. Would they be sympathetic with what was going on between the father and the son. We can only go so far.

P.v d B. Do you not get a touch of that in John's gospel as, for instance, in chapter 16 verse 32?

W.F. Would it be typical of the Old Testament saints? They knew something of what was going to come but they could not fully enter into the mystery of what God was going to do in Christ.

P.v d B. No: they could not. There was the Passover lamb, for instance, and in John 1 we have the Lamb of God. We feed on Christ as leaving the world, and on Him in John 6 in view of entering the purpose of God.

W.M. I was impressed with Abraham saying "Here am I" when God called him and in verse 7 when Isaac said "My father" Abraham said "Here am I". Is that the position we should take when God speaks to us, that we say "Here am I"?

P.v d B. I think there is a great need for fatherhood and the way it has in view a generation that is to follow on in the truth. You see that also in Paul and Timothy, the fatherly features in Paul and the way Timothy was to follow and pass on to faithful men what he had received from Paul.

W.B. Why does it say "And it came to pass after these things"?

P.v d B. There was what had preceded in the previous chapter in connection with the well of water that had been taken away from Abraham. Historically, in church history, the enemy has stopped the wells. Abraham presented the seven ewe-lambs to Abimelech. He would give him an impression of Christ, and it is after these things that this great and wonderful matter comes on to view - what enters into this present dispensation. In John's ministry we see how God, in a day of public breakdown (at the end of which we are) will see His great thoughts through in what is available to Him. God has provided for that in the present day. "On the mount of Jehovah will be provided" and we must maintain the level of the mountain of God.

D.R. In the prophet Isaiah God says "my glory will I not give to another", ch 42: 8. That means that no matter what happens God will not surrender His thoughts nor will He be diverted from them.

P.v d B. No, He will not! He will maintain His glory even in the day of small things and He will carry things through in His own way.

John gives us a distinct touch of glory, does he not, particularly when you come to the end of his gospel? The assembly as the vessel of administration has the glory of God. What was maintained on the cross will find an answer in the Lamb's wife.

D.R. Do we not reach the full thought here in the ram? It was caught by its horns. We sometimes misquote it, we say it was caught by the thicket but it was caught by its horns in the thicket.

P.v d B. Yes. The devotion in which Christ held Himself in relation to the will of God when He gave Himself for us: He would not go out free.

D.R. I thought it linked very well with what you suggested as to John's gospel, the power that has been manifested in Christ to see the whole matter of God's purpose through.

P.v d B. John was very close to the Lord Jesus: he was in the bosom of Jesus, leaning on his breast. He had the breast of the ram of consecration. The priestly company in Exodus 29 were to feed on the breast and the shoulder and John would know what it was to feed on Christ in that way, in His devotion to the will of God and the power of His devotion, as you say. What a sense John had of the love of Christ! So we have the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and John was in the bosom of Jesus. The saints of the assembly have been brought very close to the relations between the Father and the Son. We have received the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of His Son.

N.F. Can you help us a little about the end of verse 27? It speaks there of a burnt-offering. Is there a connection with Leviticus 1 where we have the burnt-offering, what it meant for God to give His only-begotten Son.

P.v d B. The burnt-offering is Christ as He offered Himself by the eternal Spirit, and the way it was pleasurable to God. The sin-offering brings in the matter of our sins, but that is not particularly seen in John's gospel: he presents Christ as the burnt offering. It says of the burnt-offering that the fire had to be burning all night until the morning (Lev 6: 9) so that the fragrance of the way that Christ

offered Himself will go up to God throughout the night of Christ's rejection. We should have an impression of the offerings in connection with the service of God-the burnt-offering in chapter 1 and in chapter 2 the oblation, the holy humanity of the Lord Jesus, the fine flour mingled with oil and anointed with oil, the fragrance of the life of Jesus. It went through testing. As baken in the pan it refers to what could be seen of the sufferings of Jesus, but baken in the oven it is what could not be seen. We should have an impression of the sufferings of Christ and the bearing it has had on the ministry of the recovery. Then in chapter 3 we have the peace-offering as connected with the fellowship, the Lord's supper. It was the food of the priestly family, including the sons and the daughters, and finally in chapter 4 the sin-offering. But the fact that the burnt-offering comes first in Leviticus in drawing near to God shows that in the service of God the burnt-offering is basic - what Christ is for the heart of God.

W.F. You mentioned that the fire was to be kept burning all night. I was thinking of Psalm 134 where it speaks of the servants of Jehovah, who by night stand in the house of Jehovah (v 1). Would there be a response secured in this way to what the burnt-offering is?

P.v d B. That is very good: so that the Lord's supper is in that setting. Paul received it from the Lord in glory but he says "that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which he was delivered up, took bread", 1 Cor 11: 23. The Lord was speaking from the glory about the night in which He was delivered up. We come together for the Lord's supper in His absence and the Supper leads on to what we are in the purpose of God in our relations with Christ and with the Father and with God. The Lord's supper is the link between the wilderness and the land.

W.M. Can we say that our relations with God can be enjoyed only through obedience?

P.v d B. I think it is important to see that we reach the assembly through the kingdom. The leading principle in the kingdom is

righteousness and subjection, without which we could not have the assembly properly. Peter speaks of our being sanctified unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 1: 2). I think that it is a great thing that God will provide on the mountain of God.

U.B. It says in verse 6, as well as in verse 8, that "they went both of them together". Would that have a bearing on Gethsemane?

P.v d B. Yes, it would enter into that. The Lord Jesus said, "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42.

U.B. Obedience was mentioned and the Lord Jesus shows us what obedience is. And with the obedience there is dependence on the Father.

P.v d B. How wonderful! It is very affecting to see the subjection of Isaac here. All we read is his question "My Father! ... Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the sheep for a burnt-offering?", and Abraham said, "My son, God will provide himself with the sheep for a burnt-offering". Finally Abraham piled the wood and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood and took the knife to slaughter his son: if it had not been for the intervention it would have been the death of his son. At that point the ram comes in. When it comes to Christ it was all in the same Person.

N.F. What could you say as to God not stopping him but it being the Angel of Jehovah that spoke?

P.v d B. It was God presenting Himself in that way. There are often references to the Angel of Jehovah when it is God Himself appearing in that way (see Genesis 31: 11,13). When Jacob wrestled with the Angel he was wrestling with God Himself (see Hosea 12: 4,5).

N.F. I thought it would speak of the feelings of God.

P.v d B. Yes, I am sure it would. What God must have felt when He spared not His own Son! None of us will ever fathom that. There is in the work of Christ what will ever be beyond us. Who could fathom what was involved in the work of redemption? But there is what has been revealed to us and that will enter eternally into the praises. It

fills your soul with worship when you think of the way God has taken! A universe of glory will be the result of it as based on the work of redemption.

W.F. Could we reverently say that God suffered in view of what He saw happening to Christ, or is that not the truth?

P.v d B. I think it would be right to say that. How God felt it! In us there is much in the way of failure in the things we do which He feels, but what must it have been to God to give His own Son. There was nothing amiss, nothing but holy perfection there when God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. And when man was doing his worst God gave His Son for you and for me. What a God we have!

P.v d B. It gave Him an additional reason for loving Him.

D.R. You feel that the indication of the Spirit there is that the Father's heart was touched to its depths.

P.v d B. Yes. We might go on to Exodus 3. Moses is here in his shepherd service and he comes to the mountain of God. There is such a need for shepherd service. I have to say for myself, and I think we could all feel it, what a lack there has been amongst us in shepherd service, not only in keeping the saints together but also to lead them into the thoughts of God, that we might arrive at the mountain of God. It was there that God made Himself known to Moses in a distinct way. He speaks in Deuteronomy 33 of the "good will of him that dwelt in the bush", v 16. Moses was on holy ground there, he had to loose his sandals from off his feet.

U.B. Is there a distinction between the mountain of God and the place behind the wilderness?

P.v d B. Yes. Moses was forty years in the backside of the wilderness where God had his ways with him, qualifying him for leading the saints in shepherd service forty years through the wilderness. At the mountain of God He makes Himself known as Jehovah, a name by which He had not been made known before (see Exodus 6: 3). God tells Moses that He is going to deliver His people out of Egypt and He was going to use Moses for it. He told

him that they were to serve Him "upon this mountain", Exod 3: 12. It was on the mountain where He made Himself known that He was to be served.

W.B. Was it the desire of Moses to bring the flock to the right place and to feed it with the best food?

P.v d B. That is it. What is needed is shepherd service. There is a need for right leadership amongst the saints and the right kind of food. The Lord said to Peter "feed my lambs", "feed my sheep". Then there is also the need for protecting the saints - "shepherds keeping watch over the flock by night". Those shepherds had a sense of glory shining around them and there was glory to God.

W.F. Moses was faithful in small things and so he could be entrusted with greater things, to lead and to feed the whole nation. David was taken from following the flock to be king of the nation.

P.v d B. God has His own way to qualify His servants and often our failures enter into the instruction.

D.R. I was reminded of what you raised in Dundee a couple of years ago that leadership and shepherd service would be in relation to the house of God. If we try to lead apart from divine principles the danger is that we lead the saints away from the house of God. This scripture gives us the pattern of one who is leading in relation to the divine system.

P.v d B. Just so.

N.F. Do you think also that love is important? The Lord Jesus said to Peter "lovest thou me?". And then He says "Shepherd my sheep".

P.v d B. That is very good. Peter had been leading the saints in the wrong direction, but the Lord recovered the whole situation Himself. How faithful the Lord has been that we should be here today! The Lord had His own way in recovering them and He gave them a warm meal before He raised things with Peter. I think that is what we need - we need warmth of affection and food and the Lord will adjust us. We see it in Elijah too. He was getting cold in his soul and God gave him a cake baked on hot stones, a warm provision was made

enabling him to go the forty days and reach the mountain of God.

So they had a warm meal in John 21 and it became a question of love for Christ. The Lord was prepared to have Peter on his own level because Peter had said "I am attached to thee" when the Lord asked him twice whether he loved Him, but the third time the Lord said to him "Art thou attached to me". He came to Peter's level and Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time "Art thou attached to me?".

W.B. The first thing is that we have to be honest in the presence of the Lord, do you not think? The Lord said "Children, have ye anything to eat?". They answered Him, No. And the Lord came in for them. The Lord reached the bottom with Peter and I think it is wholesome for us to be faced with where we are in our love for Christ, also our love for one another, His sheep, His lambs.

D.B. This matter of love helps us to see the Lord's estimation of the sheep, which needs to be our estimation.

P.v d B. That is right. What value is attached to the saints! I think John's ministry particularly gives us a sense of the value of the saints and the value of the work of God in them. Not many may be available in the light of the truth but John shows us the quality of the work of God. We need to get through to the spiritual formation that is there in the saints.

So God says to Aaron in Exodus 4, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And He went and met him on the mountain of God", v 27. I think that is to be the level of our relations with one another.

D.R. Do you think that the brotherly relationship is an eternal one?

P.v d B. I think so. It is in the purpose of God that Christ should be the firstborn among many brethren and that will go through into eternity, along with the marital relationship.

D.R. We may have a certain link in the testimony and a link, too, in service, but the greatest link is the brotherly link and I wondered if we need to be exercised to maintain these brotherly links.

P.v d B. Yes, I am sure.

N.F. Would Paul's word "salute one another with a holy kiss" enter into this?

P.v d B. That is on the level of the mountain of God not on the line of personal friendships. It is a holy kiss. Aaron met Moses on the mountain of God and kissed him.

W.M. Can we say that, when the Holy Spirit brings us to the mountain of God, we are enabled to see as He sees us, from that high level?

P.v d B. It is important that we should have God's view. Balaam was sent by the enemy to curse the people of God but he could only bless them when he viewed them from the top. Israel in that section is viewed as the elect of God "Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect?".

D.R. Do we see Paul employing the brotherly relationship in the epistle to Philemon? It was a critical time but there was a bond there that could take the strain.

P.v d B. That is an excellent illustration of it. How wonderful to see the feelings of Paul and the level on which he placed Onesimus - a brother beloved.

D.R. It appealed to me that Paul was really opening up the gates of the city of refuge.

P.v d B. Grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life. And if there was anything against Onesimus, Paul gave Philemon a blank cheque. He says "if he have wronged thee anything or owe anything to thee, put this to my account". He had confidence in Philemon that he would do even more than what Paul said. Finally he says "but withal prepare me also a lodging".

Coming to Elijah in 1 Kings 19, he was discouraged. I think we all know a little of what it is to be discouraged at times. What do you think?

D.M. I have just been thinking that each of these scriptures brings out the need to remain available for the work of the Lord.

P.v d B. That is very good, go on please.

D.M. In any pressure we may pass through, as we saw in our first Scripture as we keep near to the Lord we are provided with the needed support.

P.v d B. That is most important, I am very glad for what you say and I think that God will provide for seeing us through. We can count on Him: God is faithful. Even if we are unfaithful He remains faithful and He will see things through to completion.

D.R. It is interesting also in that way that Horeb was the last thought in the Old Testament. God says "Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb", Mal 4: 4. So right at the end of Malachi, Horeb is still there, and we can count on Horeb being present to the end of this dispensation too, the mountain of God do you think?

P.v d B. I am sure.

COLOGNE

28 October 1995

Key to initials

D.B. D.Bodman, Birmingham; U.B. U.Bohme, Bad Endbach; W.B. W.Becker, Bad Endbach; W.F. W.Finger, Koln; N.F. N.Finger, Koln; D.M. D.Martin, Colchester; W.M. W.Meyer, Jatznick; D.R. D.Robertson, Cumnock; P.v d B. P.van den Berg, The Hague

OUR RELATIONS WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

Pieter van den Berg

John 6: 57; 10: 14-15; 17: 21-22,26; 20: 21

We should be deeply impressed, dear brethren, by the relations that exist between the Father and the Son. We have spoken of the way the Father and the Son moved together typically in Genesis 22. The passages that have been read give us some sense of what is true not only in the relations between the Father and the Son, but also how close the saints are brought to that by the Holy Spirit. The assembly is a glorious vessel, as formed in the light and knowledge of the revelation of God. She is one with Christ as Man in glory and she will be nearest to God throughout all eternity, being the tabernacle of God, where God will dwell with men in the eternal state in an order of things where He will be all in all. There will be the many families in nearness to Him there, God being there in what is mediatorial where the tabernacle of God will be with men.

In this wonderful dispensation God has come out in Christ as Man, in whom all His thoughts in purpose have been secured for ever. Christ will be Mediator throughout eternity. John gives us an impression of the way God arrives at what He has purposed. He had His ways in the Old Testament but there is no dispensation like the present one. In the fulness of time God has come out in Christ. A divine Person came into manhood and will remain in manhood for ever and John presents to us the relations between the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit came upon Him and the Father sent Him, as it says "whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world", John 10: 36. He was set apart as Man and sent. This is a great point in John's gospel, that the Lord was sent.

In the verse we read in John 6, the Lord says "as the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of me", v 57. Think of the Lord living on account of the Father and that "he also who eats me shall live on account of me"! It is wonderful to see how the Father and the Son are in relation to each other and how They are working together, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work", John 5: 17. On the one hand He took a place in subjection as Son but He never ceased to be on equality with Him as God. He could say "I and the Father are one", John 10: 30 – infinitely one. Who will ever fathom the depth of

this? The Lord says, "no one knows the Son but the Father", Matt 11: 27. God has been declared in the Son and at the same time we are to arrive at the knowledge of the Son of God, "at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ", Eph 4: 13.

So here in John 6 the Lord is speaking of the relations that were there between the Father and Him as sent, and He says "he also who eats me shall live also on account of me". John 6 has to do with our entrance into the purpose of God. In John 3 the Lord speaks of the serpent lifted up in the wilderness in view of life eternal, and in John 4 of the Holy Spirit as the fountain of water springing up into eternal life, as seen typically in Numbers 21. You get the brazen serpent and the springing well there and in Joshua 3 the passage through Jordan. John 6 is typically the food that takes us over Jordan, seen in the venison the people had to take (see Joshua 1: 11). It is all in view of eternal life. God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. It is secured in the Son and it is expressed in Him. The apostles had witnessed the eternal life in the relations between the Father and the Son. John speaks of the eternal life, which was with the Father, 1 John 1: 2. It refers to the Lord here as He was known by the twelve; they beheld the glory of Christ. John says, "we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father, full of grace and truth", John 1: 14. He speaks of what they heard, what they saw and had handled concerning the word of life. John reports to us what they witnessed in the relations between the Father and the Son.

Dear brethren, Christ is now as Man in glory and the Holy Spirit has been given to us, and He is the bond between the Father and the Son, and the bond between Christ Jesus and His own. What a wonderful matter that is that by the Spirit we should come into this oneness in the relations that are there between the Father and the Son, to be one in Them.

So in John 10 the Lord speaks of the one flock "and there shall be one flock, one shepherd", v 16. This corresponds with what the assembly is as the body of Christ. The one body in Paul's ministry is

the one flock In John. You come to what is collective in John 10. Eternal life is over Jordan; it is the collective enjoyment of the purpose of God. So in verse 14 the Lord says "I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father". Think of the knowledge that was there between the Father and the Son! On the one hand there is what is unrevealed, but the Father has been made known to us in Christ. "No one knows the Son but the Father, nor does any one know the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him", Matt 11: 27. Here in John 10, the Lord is known to His own as the Father knows Him and he knows the Father. This enters into the realm of revelation. It is very wonderful what has been made known to us of the Father. The works that Jesus did were the works of the Father and the words He spoke were the Father's words; the Father was seen in Jesus. This is the wonder of what the apostles witnessed, "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes· that which we contemplated, and our hands handled concerning the word of life", 1 John 1: 1. It come to us in order that we might have fellowship with the apostles, that we might be related to the apostle's fellowship and doctrine (see Acts 2: 42). Their fellowship was with the Father and His Son.

This is how the dispensation began and how it will go through and it will be there at the end. That is the concern of John in reporting what was from the beginning, what began here in Christ in the relations divine Persons took. The report comes to us in the end of this dispensation that we might have fellowship with the apostles. He says "our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son". What a fellowship it is, beloved brethren! We can be in vital touch with that which is from the beginning. In the foundations of the wall of the heavenly city in Revelation are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, ch 21: 14. It is very important for us to see where our foundations are. The recovery has brought us back to that which is from the beginning and to the light of Paul's ministry. We sorrowfully have to accept the public breakdown, but this is what will go through vitally.

And so the Lord speaks in John 10 of the knowledge between the Father and the Son and the knowledge between Himself and His own, "I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father". Very wonderful, is it not, to be in such close relations? We spoke of John being in the bosom of Jesus and Jesus is in the bosom of the Father. There is a circulation of divine affections that will go through into eternity.

In John 17 we get an impression of how this comes through to us. Up to verse 19, He speaks to the Father in relation to the apostles and then He speaks of those that would believe through their testimony and this is where we come in. He says "I do not demand for these only, but also who believe on me through their word". We have been called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and God is faithful in regard to it. He has called us into what is going to go through and it is our privilege to come into it to be in the light of it. What a wonderful fellowship it is! So we see the flock in John 10 and in John 17 the Lord is in the presence of the Father and He says in verse 2 "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one". It is Christ and the church in the same glory according to Paul's ministry, our heavenly place in sonship, and it is related to the glory the Lord is speaking of here. We cannot speak of the Lord in the relationship of Son in the past eternity; it is a glory given to Him in time, as it says prophetically "Thou art my Son; this day have begotten thee", Ps 2: 7. The Lord is unique in His sonship, He is the Son, but such grace has been given to us that we could be in the dignity and glory of sonship associated with Christ in the presence of the Father. In John we are generally seen in the relationship of children down here in family relationships or necessary for the family conditions in which the light of Paul's ministry can still be worked out in the last days John is speaking of.

So in verse 26 the Lord says to the Father "I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known". That Name has been made known to us. We often have a sense on the Lord's day, when

we are together for the Supper, of the Lord's word to Mary "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God", John 20: 17. The disciples were rallied by the Lord through this wonderful message and as they were assembled He came in amongst them and said to them "Peace be to you" and He showed them His hands and His side. Those hands had washed their feet, and His side is a reminder as to where the origin of the assembly is as being of Him and for Him. He would thus remind them of their privilege in this way. Then He says to them a second time "Peace be to you" and this is connected with their responsibility, for He says "As the Father sent me forth, I also send you". The Father had sent Him when the Holy Spirit came on Him and now He sends them as the Father had sent Him. "He breathed into them and says to them, Receive the Holy Spirit". Their responsibility would be equal to their privilege in that way. As being sent they would serve in the sense of their relationship. His peace was connected with both privilege and responsibility as sent. The peace of Christ is in view of the one body through reconciliation, we have been reconciled to God in one body. It says in Colossians 3 "let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body", v 15. What a privilege we have as being part of the one body and what a privilege to be associated with Christ in sonship, "my Father and your Father, my God and your God". I think this is basic to our responsibility, to be in the gain of these relationships. May the Lord give us a deep sense of our privileges in view of our responsibility here in the working out of things in the testimony! He breathed into them and said "receive the Holy Spirit; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them". The remitting comes first. And then He says "whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained". The apostles are no longer here but the Holy Spirit is here, and the one body is here.

The Lord has given an open door in the day in which we are and the reality of these things is to be experienced, for it can still be worked out in the day of small things and that will be so to the end. "And the Spirit and the bride say Come", Rev 22: 17. A living state of things is anticipated, ready for the Lord to come. "And let him that

hears say Come". May there be an awakening among believers to come into the reality of these things! The verse goes on to "And let him that is athirst come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely". That is the gospel, that whosoever will may come into the blessing of it. It flows out from what we have spoken of. As together for the Supper may we have the consciousness of what our privileges are and may there be a flowing out in testimony in view of the coming of the Lord Jesus which I believe to be very near, for His Name's sake.

COLOGNE

28 October 1995

THE GIFT OF GOD

Pieter van den Berg

John 4: 5-6, 10; 2 Cor 9: 15

I would like to speak to you, dear friend, about the gift of God. We all know that verse in John 3: 16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his onlybegotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal". He has given His own Son and He has given the Holy Spirit to those that believe on Him. What a God we have! He has given everything that love could give, "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son but delivered him up for us all, shall he not also with him grant us all things? ", Rom 8: 32. Just think of what God has given: His own Son, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and "and an inheritance among them that are sanctified", Acts 26: 18! With Him He freely gives us all things. There is nothing that God has withheld, He is a giving God. How rich He is in His giving, how rich He is in His grace! We have spoken about the riches of His grace and we are in a wonderful dispensation of grace in which God is coming out to sinners who are lost in the world. "The grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men, has appeared", Titus 2: 11. It is not just for some, it is for all, that whosoever believes may be saved, and have life eternal. What a giving God we have, how great is His love! God so loved. How exceedingly great is the love of God, a love that does not want you to be lost, a love that wants you to be saved, a love that will not let you go, a love that has provided for you all the way. The Lord Jesus, our blessed Saviour, is now on high and the Holy Spirit is here in the assembly. How rich God is in His mercy and grace. The wonder of it is soon going to be displayed to the universe - what God has done in this wonderful dispensation. The world is in disorder but God has an order of things in view which is according to Himself where His love will rest eternally, where all those who have believed will be. And God has called us into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Is it not wonderful what God is offering you tonight in the gospel - not only that your sins might be forgiven, important as that is, but that you may know that

you are also justified in a risen Christ and that nothing can be raised against you. God is for you as He sees you in Christ as justified. Righteousness is imputed to everyone that is of the faith of Jesus. He was "delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification", Rom 4: 25. And now we have a place with Christ in the presence of God as taken into favour in the Beloved.

We have been speaking earlier about the way God has come out. John brings out the peculiar glory of it in his gospel. In the verse we read in John 4 we get this remarkable reference to the land which Jacob gave to his son Joseph and that a fountain of Jacob was there. It is a typical allusion to what is seen in the economy, that the Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in His hand (see John 3: 35) and the Holy Spirit in relation to it. This bears on the way God has come out in the present time, what the Father has given to the Son, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the field where God is operating, where the work of God comes to light. It is here that the woman comes into view. Just think of the Saviour, wearied with the way He had come! How far has the Saviour come for you, dear friend? And how far did He go for you? Even to death. He gave Himself without any reserve. Like the Hebrew servant, He could say "I love ... I will not go out free", Exod 21: 5. Dear friend, this is the Saviour we are announcing. His love is as great as His power and He is able to save those that come to Him and the salvation is in no other. He is the door, and it is only through Him that we can enter in. Here the Saviour is sitting, as it says, "just as he was". Just think of it! Weary as He was with the way He had come - "just as He was, at the fountain". The Holy Spirit is here and Jesus is here. He is speaking to us. "He that will, let him take the water of life freely", Rev 22: 17. The water He gives is still flowing, dear friend. Here comes the woman, she came with her history and the Lord says to her "Give me to drink". What could you say? What is there for Him in your life? What was there for Him in her life? Dear friend, He came into her life and what a change it was! No longer to go there with her waterpot. She was set free from the law of sin and of death by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (see

Romans 8: 2). She was liberated. The Lord had said to her "If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water" - "Who it is"! Do you know Him? What a blessing it is to know Jesus. He is the One who gives the living water, He is the One who gives the Holy Spirit. He is the Saviour of the world. He is also the revealer of secrets, He revealed the secrets of this woman's life. The Lord knows our hearts. I do not know your heart, I do not even know my own heart but He knows our hearts. He knows all things. Peter came to that, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I am attached to thee", John 21: 17. The Lord brought out what was wrong in the life of this woman and she recognised that He was a prophet. The prophetic word searched her, and it had its way, removing the obstacles: "The water which I shall give to him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life". It is a wonderful deliverance to receive the Holy Spirit as life in you, setting you free in liberty. She was set free and went away into the city and said "Come, see a man who told me all things". He had come into her life. What a wonderful thing it is when Jesus comes into your life, when you receive Him as your own personal Saviour. Own your sins before Him. Know that He came into the world to save sinners. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The only one without sin was Jesus. He was Who He was, the Son of man who is in heaven.

So she says to the men in the city "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?", v.29, and they believed, they said "for we have heard him ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world", v 42 - they found the confirmation of the gospel she preached. The name that was given to Joseph in Egypt in Gen 41: 45 means "Saviour of the world" and in Hebrew "Revealer of secrets". He was the Revealer of secrets to her and they recognised Him to be the Saviour of the world.

God has given all things to be in the hand of Jesus, He gave His Son for you and for me and the Father is seeking worshippers. The Lord says "the hour is coming and now is, when the true

worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers", v 23. Think of the wonder of the grace of God that such as we are taken from the pit and given the living water that becomes a fountain of water in us, springing up into eternal life, and the Lord leading us on to the Father. The Saviour was seeking what was lost and the Father was seeking worshippers and it leads on to God, "God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth". How wonderful it is that this can be presented to you in the gospel. Not only the forgiveness of your sins, not only that you are justified, but glorified through the gift of the Holy Spirit and set up in the very presence of God in the dignity of sonship, to respond to the Father and God in worship and praise. Well may we say with Paul "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable free gift" 2 Cor 9: 15. What God has given could not be fully expressed in so many words, it is so rich so free, without any reserve. God has opened the door and it is for you to come in, and enjoy all that He has prepared for those that love Him. The gospel is addressed to you in your responsibility and it is a question of obeying the glad tidings. They are being proclaimed "for obedience of faith among all the nations", Rom 1: 5. Joseph was not only the revealer of secrets for his brethren, he was the saviour of all Egypt, he was exalted and all things were given into his hand. The Lord Jesus, like Joseph, had come to His own, and His own had not received Him, "but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God", John 1: 12. "See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God. For this reason the world knows us not, because it knew him not", 1 John 3: 1. He is now exalted on high and the Holy Spirit is here, testifying of a glorified Christ. And the assembly is here and what God has in view is that you might be brought into the light of it, to be part of that wonderful vessel of praise, where God will have His eternal satisfaction in all those that are graced in the Beloved. They will be in His presence as the objects of His love eternally as a responsive company secured on the basis of redemption. This is what God has desired in His eternal purpose. He brought it about through creation and redemption and He will have eternally a scene

of blessing where His love will rest in all that speaks to Him of Christ. Beloved friends, how great are the things that He has prepared. What it cost Him none will ever fathom but we see the result of what He has freely given and we can but worship and adore Him for all that He has done. God will do the very best for His own and He will see us the whole way through. Christ is an all-the-way Saviour, able to save completely those that draw near to God by Him, and the Holy Spirit is here. May we have a deep impression of the giving of God. May we be in the living reality not only of our eternal salvation, but of the eternal relations into which in His love He has brought us as having believed the glad tidings. Faithful is He who calls, who will also perform it. For His Name's sake.

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