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MORAL HISTORY IN JOHN 3

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

“IN THE PRESENCE OF DEATH GOD SPEAKS”

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MORAL HISTORY IN JOHN 3

John 3

R.G. This chapter begins, “But there was a man from among the Pharisees”. I suppose the Lord has in mind to lead us into what is heavenly, and he uses Nicodemus – who was a genuine person – to demonstrate how nothing of the old order or what we may have relied on, is going to be carried forward into what is completely new and fresh. The system that Nicodemus had to do with does not bring anything forward for the pleasure of God, but what is in view is life. I wondered if we could look at Nicodemus from the point of view of the teaching that is contained in the section, “born anew”, and “born of water and of Spirit” and then “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”. I think the tendency is always to hang on to what is old; yet Nicodemus did not understand the teaching of what was old, which would have been related to the previous dispensation. Then we come on to this wonderful gospel section in relation to God so loving the world, and what leads up to that. It is a very wonderful outlook we have as this chapter proceeds.

T.D.B. There must have been something about Nicodemus that caused him to come. He was a ruler of the Jews, but he came to Him by night. There must have been something about the Lord that caused interest in his heart.

R.G. The Lord knows everything about everybody. It is the great lesson in the whole of scripture that the Lord knows everything about me. So He knew about Nicodemus. Nicodemus comes out in the end for Christ, but there was a good deal for him to learn, as there is a good deal for us to learn, but the Lord is proceeding to outline the truth to him. I wondered if we could get some help about that today.

R.T. Does it start with what is sovereign, the operation of God? There are the differences that you have pointed out, “born anew”, “born of water and of Spirit”, and further on in the chapter “everyone that is born of the Spirit”. Is there some distinction to be understood

between the sovereign operation of God, which is His own act, but then there is a moral side to take place in our souls as well, is there?

R.V. It behoves us to take account of that as sitting here this afternoon. Why are we not somewhere else? Why is someone else not sitting in my seat? It is the sovereign operation of God by the Spirit. Maybe it is a time for us all to look back and see when there was some movement as a result of the Spirit's operations in us.

R.T. It may have happened very early in our lives through our mother's prayers or something else – God sovereignly did something – but it takes time for that to show itself.

R.G. You see it in retrospect, I suppose. You can look back and see when there was some kind of stirring in your soul that made what was of God become attractive in a certain sense, only a seed maybe to begin with. It may have made your attitude to the saints a little different from what it was before. It may be that a time came when you wanted to be with the saints. I am just using these as examples of how, when you look back in retrospect, you see that something had operated in you that was not of yourself.

D.P. I think that is so. You feel the urgency of the days in which we are that we need to grow quickly in this sphere. Nicodemus took a long time. You know your heart and I know mine too, that it has taken us a long time to come to an appreciation of these great things that have been opened up to us, truly related to the heavenly sphere. Nicodemus was bound up in Judaism, but the Lord never was held by that. He was held by what had been prophetically uttered which was God's word expressed. How much we need to be stimulated to be kept in life.

M.C. It is difficult to track in our histories of how God began things with us. There was nothing due to me nor anything that I did to bring myself into the sphere of life, but God operated in His own wisdom, love and mercy to begin something in my soul. It is a very fine thing to trace that back and to appreciate it.

R.G. "Having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself" (Eph. 1: 5), leads you back to God's purpose, but

then God came in in His ways by the Spirit to affect us at some point in our lives. I think it is a good thing to go back to it, because it stimulates you, to see how the Lord by the Spirit operated in your soul in an earlier or later stage in your life.

T.D.B. Would it be subjective, the stirrings in us?

R.G. I think the truth that is laid out in this chapter is more objective, but the subjective is seen in the next chapter in the woman. That was why I was saying that it is often more in retrospect that you can begin to detect it. Nevertheless there was a subjective work in you but you probably did not appreciate what it was. I think He is drawing attention to God's ways by the Spirit in persons. It enhances to us the greatness of divine Persons and divine workings.

A.B. Does Nicodemus immediately think on natural lines, "How can a man be born being old? Can he enter a second time into the womb"? That is the way he thinks, on purely natural lines, but "he who has begun in you a good work" (Phil 1: 6), would be the sovereign action of God's Spirit in new birth, would it?

R.G. According to Nicodemus there would have been no change. He says, "Can he enter a second time into the womb of his mother and born?". If that was the case it would be the same kind of person again and that is what men are trying to do. Cloning is an attempt, and will be an attempt, for man to reproduce himself, and it will only be the reproduction of the same man. This chapter shows that every person who is sovereignly acted upon by God comes into a new order of things, which is heavenly. He is moving on to what is upward here.

A.W. The note speaks about the new source. Is that really the point in this – it is a new source altogether?

R.G. It is entirely fresh, there is nothing of the old connected with it. God has ever had in mind, right from the beginning, that He would have a world populated by persons who would be like Christ and, therefore, in contrast to the man that failed in the garden.

A.W. It speaks prophetically about the Lord Jesus, “For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground”, Isa 53: 2. Would that be the result? I do not mean that the Lord needed to have a new source, but is that recreated in those who have been reached sovereignly by new birth?

R.G. The Lord when He was here was a different kind of man. He did not come this way and He is working now with a view to there being a generation of persons who will be like Him, to take their place alongside of Him. There has to be the work of God but this is the beginning of the workings in the soul. Much exercise has then to be gone through. You come to accept the gospel and receive the gift of the Spirit. That is all part of the ways of God as we move forward. But this is the outset, the seed of what is afresh in you is being planted here.

M.C. Could you say something as to seeing the kingdom of God, “he cannot see the kingdom of God”?

R.G. It is obvious that there is progression. The first thing is that he sees, and then he enters. I think it is what we were saying – there is something that stirs in your heart that makes you see things differently from how you saw them before.

M.C. It is how God works to open up our view to something entirely new, and you begin to realise that there are great things opened up as God works in your soul.

R.G. It says of Paul, “it is hard for thee to kick against goads”, Acts 26: 14. I think that was the beginning of the workings in his soul. While he was still on another course there was something stirring in him that made him begin to be alert to another area of things and another Man, although he did not know who the Man was.

D.P. That comes into expression when he speaks as to the death of “thy holy servant Stephen”. Obviously there were prickings in Saul’s soul but it took time, and that is how things operate. It takes time with us to come to things. Nicodemus here was seeking, but he got help as time went on and things related to another sphere begin to be opened up to him. He had been looking for a kingdom being

established here (that was the Jewish mind), but this is a kingdom related to another sphere.

R.G. It is amazing how long you can go on knowing about a thing but not knowing the reality of it. Nicodemus knew about Ezekiel 36, but it had never affected him. He probably gave a word about it in the synagogue, and yet was quite unaware of what it envisaged. If he had understood that, the Lord would have been able to have gone quickly on with him. He says, “If I have said the earthly things to you”, (if I have said things that relate to what is going to happen down here), “and ye believe not”, how if He was to explain heavenly things to him was he going to understand? In one sense that is a comfort to us because it means that if we allow the sovereign work of God to operate in us then there will be a result for Christ.

R.T. His voice from the council – they were criticising Jesus – it says, “Does our law judge a man before it have first heard from himself”, John 7: 51. That was him seeing the kingdom of God. Then at the end of the gospel he identifies himself, with Joseph, with the body of Jesus. There he was entering the kingdom.

R.G. He had brought the myrrh and the aloes with him. That was “entering into” it and he was able to link on with Joseph of Aramathea at that time. Something had been brought to fruition which allowed him to enter in; he saw the king at that point.

R.T. To enter the kingdom of God there has to be the water and the Spirit. There has to be a moral element with us. We have to move, there has to be exercise. There are many who just see the kingdom but they never enter it. There has to be some exercise.

M.C. Why is the water first, “water and of Spirit”?

R.T. It would be a moral question with us. The first thing God does is sovereign; we have no hand in that at all. God sovereignly operates for us to be born anew. Take Lot – he illustrates what it is to be born anew but he went and lived in Sodom. There was no moral element with him; he sat in their council and he vexed his righteous soul. There has to be a moral exercise in our souls to come into the kingdom of God, otherwise the Spirit is not there.

There is all the difference between the Spirit acting in new birth and having the Holy Spirit.

D.P. The water is really for cleansing. Does that make way for obedience in view of our knowing the reception of the Spirit and being able to use Him in our lives and pathways here? That sets us forward.

R.T. We do not get the gift of the Spirit unless there is a moral element. If we do not make room for the sovereign work of God in our souls we do not have the gift of the Holy Spirit.

D.P. I wondered if that related to the water, the cleansing side; something morally has taken place and that makes way for the Spirit to have freedom in service.

R.T. When the Spirit is recognised and given His place we come into the kingdom, come under new authority, and we will have a new area of interest and blessing.

R.G. It is good to be reminded about all of this because we know that the blood is essential. The blood removes our guilt and our sins once and for all, but the water is essential. I think it is good to be reminded too that the Spirit operates in the application of the water in many different ways. "The washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5: 26), suggests a cleansing process as you allow the word of God to have its effect on you. It is a continuing process. The action of the water and the Spirit is not something that is once and for all. It proceeds in your soul and then the Spirit has a greater place in you if the water has had its effect morally to wash away all that needs to be washed away in cleansing.

N.McK. I am glad of help in relation to the flesh and the Spirit. It is good to see that even initially there is what is moral and that which is spiritual brought in. The man in John 9 has been linked with the washing. He was told, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted, Sent. He went therefore and washed" (v.7). Even after that he did not know where the Lord was but Jesus found him and he got the good of what we have been speaking about because he had been through this side of things.

R.G. The thought of the water runs through the early chapters of John's gospel, culminating in the pool of Siloam. It is further on because it is related to the Son of God, but it is the same idea. The pool of Siloam was there, available for him to have the mud washed from his eyes.

T.L. Isaiah 42 says, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!" (v.1). It then goes on to say, "Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare" (v.9). It is like the beginning of this chapter is it not?

R.G. You can understand how when Nicodemus did have his eyes opened everything was new to him. It took time, but there was what is genuine about him. We should value what is genuine in one another. I would like to encourage the young people by saying if there is that which is genuine in you the Lord will not leave you at a loose end. He will lead you through as long as you are prepared to genuinely submit and be subject to Him. That was the next thing, Nicodemus had to be subject to the Lord.

R.T. It is hard to see it unless there is a move to enter. What God does is hard to see, but if it is made room for it will express itself in some way.

N.McK. It relates us to earthly things. We are taught that even in saints in the old dispensation there was something of new birth. Would you explain that?

R.G. It is seen in type working in Old Testament saints. We have to keep in mind that there is a progression in this chapter which is going on to eternal life. Eternal life will be known in the millennium, but it is to be known by us now in what Mr. Darby spoke of as to an out of the world condition of relationship and being. It was seen in Christ here. Christ is now in glory and by the Spirit coming here He brings the power and enjoyment of eternal life to the Christian. The Jew is going to understand that according to Ezekiel 36, but we are moving on in this chapter to experience it now.

D.P. The new source is in Christ, it is nowhere else, and yet it brings us into the most blessed things.

Ques. Would you say a bit more as to verse 8, “The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its voice but knowest not whence it comes and where it goes”? Is there a certain sense of mystery in the Spirit’s movements?

R.G. I think it demonstrates the sovereign operation of the Spirit. Jesus is using the wind as an example. You know that if you are outside in the wind you may not know where it is coming from or where it is going, but you know it is there. That is what he is saying here, “The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its voice, but knowest not whence it comes and where it goes”; but you do know where it goes when something happens in you. It has had an effect in your own soul and now you have the beginning of an appetite. That may be as far as you can see it at that point.

R.T. There is an identity emerging, “thus is every one that is born of the Spirit”, an identity of something so different emerging which brings me to the work of God.

T.D.B. Would that be what you call a moral element?

R.T. The type that has been used to amplify this chapter was Jacob. Before he was born he had some instincts, he took hold of Esau’s heel. That suggests being born anew. God did that. Before ever anything emerges there were some instincts. A newborn babe has instincts, it knows to feed, it cannot intelligently say anything about it, but it knows to feed; that is like a sign of being born again. Jacob goes on in his life and goes through a lot of exercises, but he comes to see that his life is not with Laban. Then he wrestles with God. There is a moral element entering into that. He has to see that he cannot do anything. God touches his thigh; he sees that there is something there that is not of himself, but there is something of God, he begins to wrestle. That is a moral element. We begin to say, ‘why is that there is something in me wanting to read the scriptures, wanting to go to the meetings, why is there something that does not want to go to the football field or the cinema’? That is the moral element working in the soul and as that is made room for there is an

identity emerging. Jacob then is called the prince, there is a new person emerging that has some power with God.

A.B. It left its mark. It says, “he limped”, Gen 32: 31. Is it something that leaves its indelible mark upon us?

R.T. ‘The prince’, “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”. There is something there. He was limping, that meant there was no credit to him, but there was a prince there, through wrestling. If we sit and let it go over our head no identity emerges, but if we wrestle with things, begin to reason, begin to make room for the Spirit, there is a moral exercise in the soul and a new identity emerges so God says, You are Israel.

R.G. He did not get everything at that point but he was moving. He wanted to know His name but it was a while before that was divulged to him. You are on the road, you are a prince at that point, but you are to understand the greatness of the person who has made you a prince.

R.T. He did not live there. He says, I have to go to Bethel, and there is in type the enjoyment of eternal life. You do not live in the circumstances that Esau lives in; you could not live with that man, but you live in Bethel where eternal life is enjoyed. As you said, we should go back in our histories and see that God put a seed there. For years and years I never made room for it, but then we begin to make room for it, the moral element works in the soul and you come to live in Bethel.

D.P. You come to appreciate there what is ascending and descending, what is coming from the heavenly source. That is where our life and power comes from so that we might be maintained.

R.T. The boys grew; Esau became a man of the field, he loved the sports, but it says Jacob was a homely man. We may think of him like one who went to the meetings, loved to read the scriptures, began to read ministry. That is how the moral element works in the soul and there is something that emerges that is identifiable with

Bethel, this area we are speaking of here, eternal life. But it must be made room for.

R.G. As it is made room for we have a greater appetite and that would be a challenge to us. The Lord may have waited a long time for us to respond to what he did earlier in our lives. It would be good to ask ourselves, are we fully giving ourselves to what the Lord has in mind for us? Are princely feature coming out in us?

T.D.B. Do you put conversion in all this?

R.G. We are coming to that in the chapter. I think there was a recognition with Jacob when he started to limp upon his hip that there had been a change in him. That would be conversion. Maybe he did not understand the fulness of what God had in mind. At conversion you do not understand the greatness of what God has in mind, but you do get an understanding that you have been brought into a new area and you have changed from one man to another man. That is what Jacob did at this point.

R.T. We hold up the Lord if speaking just earthly things. We get an impression at the Supper of heavenly things. We would want to make room for that so that we get the earthly things, the moral element that we are speaking of – shutting out another order of things, but we want to be stimulated by these things that the Lord gives us a touch of. He gave Jacob a touch of it when he said to him, “Thy name shall not henceforth be called Jacob, but Israel” (Gen 32: 28), but it took him some time to come into the dignity of it. The Lord would give us a touch at the Supper of the heavenly things and encourage us to make room for the moral side so that we are in the full joy of what eternal life it.

M.C. Verse 11 seems to reinforce that, “I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and we bear witness of that which we have seen”. These are very great things. It would seem that it had some impact on Nicodemus. He must have thought about it, and it seems to have had some result in his soul.

R.T. “We speak” – do you think He must have had His disciples with Him then, some persons who had the gain of entering the kingdom?

Think of Peter and John and Andrew standing beside Him when He is saying these things, some persons who had come to some appreciation of the heavenly things. They had got past the earthly things and had come to Christ and there is some enjoyment of the heavenly things in them. It says, “We speak”, some persons in the joy of it.

R.G. In that connection would the “We speak” initially be the Lord and the Spirit in Him, but then, as you say, there had been something reached in the souls of the few disciples that He could include them in that? It would be the Spirit in a sense, although the Spirit had not come because He was not yet glorified, but there would be the power of the Spirit manifested, “We speak”.

R.T. We do not want to hold the Lord up. Earthly things may be so long protracted with us. The Lord is urgent; he is urgent here as to these heavenly things. The things the Lord was ready to unfold to them. It says that He could not say things to them because of their state. State comes into the entering into the heavenly things, if there is room made for what the Lord would reveal to us of the Father’s name for example.

R.G. He then says, “And no one has gone up into heaven, save He who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven”.

That is a tremendous thing for the Lord to say at this stage. He is drawing attention to the greatness of His Person, “the Son of man who is in heaven”. There is nothing short of what belongs to heaven available to those that follow. What He is setting out here is for our blessing.

KIRKCALDY

7 March 2004

Key to Initials

T.D. Beveridge; A Buchan; M. Cowan; T. Lock (Edinburgh); R. Gardiner; N. McKay (Glasgow); D. Pye, R. Taylor; A. Wilson

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Ian Barlow

John 1: 29; 4: 29; 6: 68; 10: 41, 42

This week what has been brought specially before us is the greatness and glory and uniqueness of the One whom we preach in the glad tidings. I suppose the whole of scripture, in one sense, speaks of that glorious One. We could have read from the Old Testament. How many beautiful scriptures there are there speaking of the Lord Jesus and could speak of no other. We were reminded of one this past week, "His name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace", Isa. 9: 6. Of whom else could that be said? There is only one glorious Person of whom that could be said. No one else could claim any of those titles, could claim even one of them, but think of the Lord Jesus, the One in whom every title there is perfectly seen.

We could have read in the other gospels of what God says of Jesus. Think of that voice out of heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son", Matt 3: 17. In one sense that is what is most important, what God thinks of Jesus, His beloved Son, in whom He has found His delight. Again the voice later on out of the cloud saying, "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him", Matt. 17: 5. We could have read those scriptures which speak alone of Jesus, for this could speak of no other. We were reminded in the gospel last week of the uniqueness of that glorious One, He was unique in His birth, unique in His death. Oh the glory that marks Him! That is the One whom God is presenting in the glad tidings as the only Saviour for men, the One in whom He has found *His* delight.

However, I read these verses in John's gospel because they all speak of the Lord Jesus – they could speak of no other than the One who bears that Name – but they were all spoken by persons of like passions as ourselves. One has to be careful because the first is said by John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus says of John the Baptist, "Verily I say to you, that there is not arisen among the born

of women a greater than John the Baptist” (Matt 11: 11). We have all come as born of woman, however, the Lord Jesus thus draws attention to him. When John the Baptist sees Jesus coming to him he says, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” – One who takes away the sin of the world. Possibly I am speaking to those who are believers who have put their faith and trust in the Saviour, but what it is to see Him thus! The One who has borne the judgment due to sin, who has gone into death to remove any barrier there is between a soul and God. Every believer stands before God through the efficacy of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Elsewhere it says, “*he* is the propitiation for our sins; not for ours alone, but also for the whole world”, 1 John 2: 2. Think of John seeing the Lord Jesus and exclaiming, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. It could draw attention only to One, no other could bear that title or effect that work. He alone has done that for God, the One who John refers to here as the Lamb of God. Think of what that involved; it meant that He came into this scene as a babe in Bethlehem’s manger, how He moved down here amongst men, the One who conveyed the heart of God towards them. We had a sense of that this morning, that God delighted to make His heart known to men, and it involved the in-coming of Jesus, God come so near, the Lamb of God. One who has come so near, nearer He could not come. I often think of that hymn:

Sinner, see thy God beside thee,
In a servant’s form come near,
Sitting, walking, talking with thee!
Sinai’s mount no longer fear. (Hymn 112)

“Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”, but can you say He has taken away my sin? He has died for you, whoever you are, whatever you have done, however old, however young you may be. He has gone that way to take away the judgment which is rightly due to you and me, to take it upon Himself; “God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us”, Rom. 5: 8.

What a wonderful thing it is that we can preach a work that is certain and sure, because it is centred in this glorious Person. Think of Him

moved among men, showing grace, thus displaying God's heart of love, and expressing divine compassion. Think of the feelings of the Lord Jesus as He moved down here, seeing what havoc sin and sins had wrought on every hand. He was there the sinless One, the perfect One. It was right at the beginning of the Lord's service here that the voice out of heaven came and declared "This is my beloved Son in whom I have found my delight". We are not told very much about those earlier years, but we get a glimpse when the Lord Jesus says, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", Luke 2: 49. That is what He came for. It says elsewhere, "Lo, I come in the roll of the book it is written of me to do, O God, thy will", Heb. 10: 7. Think of the One who came here to do no other will, the One who came here to do the will of God and fulfilled it perfectly, everything that God had desired to see in man was found alone in Jesus. How God finds His full delight in Jesus. We sang that in the hymn:

God has full delight in Jesus (Hymn 219)

Have you found your delight in Him too? God has full delight in Him, He has perfectly satisfied God, He is presented as Saviour that we might find our satisfaction in Him too. It meant that He went that way of suffering, went the way of shame. Think of what men did to Jesus. Yet on the one hand He says, "I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me" (John 10: 17,18), the perfect sacrifice. On the other hand there is man's responsibility in what he did to Jesus. At the end of John's gospel we have the witness, Pilate says when He is falsely accused and brought before him, "I find no fault whatever in him", John 18: 38. The chief priests and the officers cried, "Crucify, crucify him" (John 19: 6). Think of the hatred of the world against Jesus. That is still the same today, but again Pilate says, "I find no fault in him". That could only be said of the Lord Jesus, the One in whom there was no fault for He who knew not sin was made sin for us. Think of Him there nailed to a cross, placed in the middle, crucified along with two malefactors, one on this side and one on that: He must be the one who was in the middle. One of the malefactors said of Him, "this man has done

nothing amiss”, Luke 23: 41. It could only be said of Jesus, that glorious One. However, think of Him hanging there, of what He took, that judgment that was due to me from a holy and righteous God was borne by Jesus; God’s full wrath against sin. How we get so accustomed to sin! We live in a world that is full of it, we find it within and we find it around, but think of God’s holy wrath against sin. The hymn says:

God could not pass the sinner by,
Justice demands that he should die (Hymn 357)

The Lord Jesus, the spotless, sinless One who took that judgment upon Himself and bore God’s wrath against sin. Mr. Darby says as to Him, death was death, man’s utter weakness, Satan’s extreme power, and God’s just vengeance. Think of what was arrayed against Jesus at that time, the hatred of the world, the power of Satan and the wrath of God, all borne by Him. What a glorious man! He bore my sins. Are you able to say that, that He bore your sins?

He bore the sins of all who trust Him in His body on the tree, that God’s judgment should be exhausted. The Lord Jesus had to go that way that sins and sin should be utterly dealt with. The veil of the temple was rent and poor needy sinners like you and me could come to Him because He was fully satisfied with the work of Jesus.

He hung there and shed His precious blood for “without blood-shedding, there is no remission”, Heb. 9: 22. That precious blood has been shed, that precious blood which cleanses us from every sin. How great these things are for our hearts to lay hold of, that the Saviour shed His precious blood that we might be free, that God might establish a righteous basis to bless and to remove every barrier between Himself and Man. It is God’s appreciation of that precious blood. May our appreciation of it grow, but it is God’s appreciation of it, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you”, Exod 12: 13. The Saviour has borne our sins in His body on the tree and died: He shed His precious blood that we might be washed, that we may be able to stand before God in the worth of that beloved One and therefore have peace with God. How great, how glorious the glad tidings are. God has done everything from His own side, He

has provided this glorious, unique One, the One who is beyond compare.

He not only shed His precious blood but He lay in death, He went that way vicariously, that the man that sinned should be removed forever from God's sight. Three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, that not only sins and sin should be dealt with, but the man that sinned should be removed for ever from God's sight. That glorious One was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father. It also says that it was not possible that He should be held by its power. He by going into death slew the power of death. There was only one glorious Man who could accomplish it to God's full satisfaction that people might be able to have peace with God, have liberty, freedom. Men think they are free at the present time, but they are really captive to sin. There is only one way of freedom and that is by putting our trust and faith in this glorious One.

In John 4, the scripture is well known – the woman of John 4 is often referred to – she had had to do with Jesus for herself. That is essential in the glad tidings that we are to have to do with Jesus for ourselves, each one individually has to do with that glorious One. He spoke to her of the most wonderful things, a woman who was to the world of no account, but she had a need and the Lord Jesus had the answer to her need. A woman who had come to that well, time after time but found no abiding satisfaction, met Jesus and found satisfaction in Him. She says in that verse, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done". That could be no other, there is no other man who could tell you all things that you had ever done, One who knows you through and through, One who knows you intimately, knows all about you. She says, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?". I suppose when that woman realised that and who it was, it would have caused repentance in her own heart. That is needed. A hymn says, repentance only God requires from man, and faith in Christ His well beloved Son. What it is to know that there is One who knows all about you. He knows your need, He knows your longings, He knows

whether you are satisfied because there is no lasting satisfaction apart from Himself. That is God's anointed One, the One in whom God has full delight. She came to an appreciation of that glorious One. We are to come to an appreciation as knowing our sins are forgiven because of His work, as knowing Him as the One who is the source of satisfaction; surely our hearts would have a greater appreciation of Him and His glorious worth.

In chapter 6, the Lord Jesus had questioned the twelve as to whether they also would go away. Others had gone away, but the Lord Jesus questioned them and Peter answers him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal". What it is to have life eternal! Where is that found? It is found only in One glorious Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. It says, "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly", John 10: 10. People are seeking for life at the present time, and I challenge myself, where do I find my life? It is a sobering fact that everything here is marked and bounded by death. Everything that people naturally find their lives in, all that is so near to our own hearts is all bounded by death and decay, and is uncertain, unsure and unsettled. We live in that sort of world because it is marked by death on every hand, but what it is to come to know the One who can give life eternal.

Life is found alone in Jesus (Hymn 266)

The hymn writer says, it is found there alone, in Him is life. Have you found your life in Jesus? The gospel is preached that we may be saved from our sins in having to do with the Lord Jesus, coming to repentance and putting our faith and trust in Him that we may find in Him, life eternal. That is God's desire. It says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", John 3: 15.

God has nothing less in mind for His creature, for God wants to bless men, wherever they have been, whatever state they are in, God's desires are towards men in blessing that persons may have life eternal. It would be a wonderful thing to echo the words that Peter answers here, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"; he had come to it that there was no one else. There is only one Name given amongst

men whereby we must be saved (see Acts 4: 12). Peter had come to it here, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” – do you know anyone else to go to? No. The only answer is to go to Jesus, everything is found in Him.

Chapter 10 says, “And many came to him, and said, John did no sign; but all things which John said of this man were true”. Again that could be said of no one else. It is wonderful to read through the scriptures and see the things which could be said of Jesus alone and no one else. That marks Him out in His glorious uniqueness as the One beyond compare. It says, “but all things which John said of this man were true. And many believed on him there”. That is the intent of the glad tidings that persons should believe on Him. You can go back and read what John the Baptist spoke of as to the Lord Jesus; only a little is recorded in John’s gospel, however the testimony of these persons was that, “*all* things which John said of this man were true”. Elsewhere it says He does *all* things well (see Mark 7: 37), that could not be said of any man either. Go through the scriptures and see things that could only be said of Jesus and could be said of no one else. It brings out His glorious uniqueness, perfection and glory.

The Spirit would attract our hearts to these things. God has given His beloved Son, the One in whom He has found full delight and His desire is that we may find full delight in Him as the One who has taken upon Himself what lay upon us, the One in whom life is, and He has given too of His own blest Spirit that we may know it and so that our hearts may be attracted to this glorious One. Do you know what it is to have the Spirit of God? It says, “how much rather shall the Father who is of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”, Luke 11: 13. The Spirit has come, the Lord Jesus having been glorified, “For God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”, Acts 2: 36. Think of that present position of exaltation and as a result of Him being glorified the Spirit is here at the present time. The One who is spoken of as the, “earnest of our inheritance” (Eph. 1: 14), the One who would attract our hearts into these things, the One who would make these things

good in our own hearts that we may find life abundantly and life eternal in Jesus, the One who would speak to us of all the great and glorious blessings that God has bestowed upon us in His beloved Son, for everything is in Him. Everything for God's glory is secured in Jesus, everything for our blessing is secured in that same One too. What a Man! Glorious Man, Son of God, Son of Man, how great a Person He is. May our hearts, by the Spirit's power, be led in a greater way that He may mean more to us, may have a greater part in each of our lives here, that there may be more for God's glory and for His testimony in the present time. John tells us why he wrote his gospel at the end, "these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name", John 20: 31. The Spirit's power is here that we may know these things that they may be good in our own hearts and that there may be more for God's glory and His praise. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

ST ALBANS

11 January 2004

“IN THE PRESENCE OF DEATH GOD SPEAKS”

In the presence of death God speaks,
But what is He saying to me?
One thing is sure – He speaks to us all,
But what is He saying to me?

In the presence of death God speaks,
But what is He saying to me?
He says, I have balm for your sad, aching heart,
And comfort, my loved one, for thee.

In the presence of death God speaks,
But what is He saying to me?
I have put in my claim for this loved one of thine,
Just as I will for thee.

In the presence of death God speaks,
But what is He saying to me?
He says, This one left a good legacy,
But what would be said of thee?

In the presence of death God speaks,
But what is He saying to me?
This one had faith in the shed blood of Christ,
But can this be said of thee?

In the presence of death God speaks,

But what is He saying to me?
One thing is sure – He speaks to us all,
But what is He saying to ME?

Robert McClean – 2001

GRIMSBY