

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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WHAT THINK YE CONCERNING THE CHRIST?

Archie D Melville

Matthew 22: 41-46; 3: 16-17; 27: 27-31, 39-43, 54, 57-60, 65-66

The verse that has impressed me in view of the preaching of the glad tidings today is the verse in chapter 22 of this book, "The Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus demanded of them, saying, What think ye concerning the Christ? whose son is he?" Jesus asks, "What think ye concerning the Christ?"

It is as relevant to every one of us here as it was to the Pharisees to whom it was addressed, because depending on your thoughts, your response will determine your eternal destiny. So this is a very searching question, a very serious question that has great application to the preaching of the glad tidings, because Jesus demanded an answer. This is something that we cannot ignore or refuse; we cannot turn this question aside: we must respond to it. So we are faced in the glad tidings with a decision, something that we need to answer, and the question comes from none other than Jesus, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world: "What think ye concerning the Christ?"

Let us first consider what the Father thinks of Christ. That is the reason I read in chapter 3: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight". The heavens opened and the Spirit descended as a dove coming upon Him and a voice out of heaven making this public declaration, a voice that could be heard, the acclamation of heaven resting upon this blessed One. So our hymn says,

The Saviour, Jesus, who is He?
The Mighty God, a Man become! (Hymn 34)

Well, this was the voice from heaven proclaiming delight in the Person, His beloved Son, His only Son, the One whom He sent into the world to be the Saviour of the world.

So we start from this point of view that God has declared His supreme delight in Jesus. Is there any other name, is there any other man that you could think of, that you could put forward, for whom God the Father would open the heavens upon and declare His supreme delight? Is there any great warrior, any great emperor, is there any great theologian, or any great man amongst men? No, there is not! And we can tell you on the basis of scripture that there is no other name "given among men by which we must be saved", Acts 4: 12. So let us focus our attention, dear friends, on coming to a conclusion as to what

we - in a personal way - will say as to the Christ. Jesus demands of these Pharisees an answer: "What think ye ... ?", and the second question, "whose son is he?". Both of these questions need to be resolved in each of our hearts.

We turn to Matthew 27 and we find the cross of Jesus. We find the coming together, the meeting together, of wickedness in its extremity, and love in its enormity. The cross displays the wonder of God's grace and love towards sinners, and it brings out the hatred of man's heart. Let us consider responses that we see in this chapter.

The soldiers of the governor take Jesus with them to the praetorium and they gather together the whole band. "And having taken off His garment, put on him a scarlet cloak; and having woven a crown of thorns, they put it on His head". What response do we see here, dear friends? We see the response of persons who, we might say, were quite ignorant. These soldiers were employed by the Roman power, the soldiers of the governor; they would be, perhaps, not even conscious, not even aware of who Jesus was. They were carrying out their part in this scene, as they had done on many other occasions: the crucifixion, they thought, of a malefactor. It meant nothing to them and it is evident that there is no other response from them but mockery, self-pleasure, humiliation of a victim, One unable to do anything in His own defence. They humiliated Him, placing the crown of thorns upon His head, giving Him a reed as a token of authority in His right hand, and then the supreme insult, a universal insult, understood in every country of the world; if a man spits in the face of another it is the final indignity, an insult beyond compare. They took the reed and beat Him on His head, inflicting pain. "And when they had mocked him, they took the cloak off him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify". And it says, "And having come to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a skull ... having crucified him, they parted his clothes amongst themselves, casting lots. And sitting down, they kept guard". They did their utmost to humiliate and to degrade this blessed One, and completed their insults, offering Him vinegar mingled with gall to drink.

The Saviour, it says, "having tasted it ... would not drink". The Saviour undertook the sufferings of Golgotha without any mitigation whatsoever. There was nothing to mitigate His sufferings or alleviate in any way. He would not receive this from the hand of the soldiers. In fact, the gall would be bitter and add injury to insult.

But then we find that there is another group of persons here who pass by. "The passers-by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying,

Thou that destroyest the temple”. Persons passing by: are you in that category? Are you passing by, and just by the way hear that the Saviour has been crucified, and then make your decision? They said, “Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou art Son of God”. The infidelity of the human mind enters into this speech. Many persons are infidel; in fact the human heart is infidel as to the person of Christ, and they say, “If thou art Son of God”. No belief, no faith just more and more reviling.

And then there is the third category here: scribes and elders and chief priests. Now these persons are the most intelligent persons. They are the persons who had the Scriptures, the Old Testament, who studied them. They were advanced in their study of the Old Testament scriptures. They were not ignorant; they knew what they were saying. They said, “He saved others, himself he cannot save. He is King of Israel”. Dear friend, if you know who Jesus is and you continue to heap insult upon Him, or disregard Him, or make such comment “let him descend now from the cross, and we will believe on him”, you bear the greatest responsibility. The Lord said to another person (in the parable in Luke 16) that even if one came back from the dead they would not believe, v 31. These persons continued in full knowledge of what they were doing and said, “For he said, I am Son of God”.

And then there was a fourth category: two malefactors, two persons who were guilty, who were suffering the just recompense for the deeds that they had done. They cast the same reproaches on him. These are all negative responses and may our hearts be delivered from *any* such response. But, “What think ye concerning the Christ?”. How wonderful that Luke records the conversion of one malefactor who says, “Lord ” to Jesus.

Further down the chapter we find that there is a certain centurion. “And they who were with him on guard over Jesus, seeing the earthquake and the things that took place, feared greatly, saying, Truly this man was Son of God”. Here is a man who expresses his thoughts as to the Christ. He got right to the very crux of the matter, dear friends. He says, “Truly”. To speak truly is that you consider what you are saying. You weigh it up and you take account as this centurion did of what has happened. He feared greatly, the fear of God. “Truly this man was Son of God”. Are you going to truly respond tonight, to recognise who the Saviour Jesus is? That truly, He is the Son of God.

That was denied, vehemently denied, by the religious people of the day. The scribes and Pharisees said, “he said, I am Son of God”.

That was one thing that the scribes and Pharisees could not bear - the fact that there was One in their midst who truly was the Son of God. Now here is a man, a centurion, who could have been part with the soldiers who had kept guard. God in His mercy intervenes even among the group of persons who were most ignorant and most unresponsive, and indeed reviling, and He snatches this person from the grip of Satan, and he says, "Truly this man was Son of God". God can turn this occasion, this solemn occasion of the Lord being crucified into an opportunity of salvation.

It says, "there came a rich man of Arimathæa, his name Joseph, who also himself was a disciple". He knew who Jesus was. He came alongside in this moment of need and after He was crucified: "*He*, going to Pilate, begged the body of Jesus". He was a person who knew who the Christ was. He knew that this was Jesus, the Saviour of the world, and he was His disciple. He going to Pilate begged the body, and Pilate commanded that it be given up. And Joseph got the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his new tomb which was hewn in the rock; having rolled a stone to the door of the tomb he went away. He fulfilled a great service. Indeed it was prophetically announced Jesus would be "with the rich in his death" (Isa 53: 9), and this man, a rich man, stepped forward at this moment and owned his allegiance to the Christ and provided a new tomb in which to lay the body of Jesus. Joseph was the one who fulfilled this service in a tender and caring way. There was no mockery; there was no hint of disregard in the service of Joseph of Arimathæa. He laid the body in the new tomb which he had hewn in the rock, and rolled the stone there to the door of the tomb. And he went away, his service completed.

There were also women who came to the cross, and they aligned themselves with Jesus. They made their decision, and they came to the cross and stood by, Mary of Magdalene and the other Mary. They were there, and Jesus spoke to them. He spoke to John that he should take care of his mother (John 19: 26, 27), to demonstrate to our souls that on the one hand man in his wickedness did his worse, God in His mercy did His best.

It says, "Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?". There were none who could follow there. Some of those who stood there when they heard it said He called for Elias. Very few persons understood; very few really were sympathetic. The psalmist tells us that he sought sympathy and he found none, Ps 69: 20. The wonder of

the matter is that this whole crucifixion, the going into death, the dying and the rising again was all accomplished in order that man, you and I, might come to a right conclusion as to who the Christ is in His own Person, who He is and what He has done.

Think of these sufferings unfathomed. We can see the sufferings in an outward way, we can see the things that would melt our hearts in grief and sorrow and in sympathy. We can see the injustice; we can see the mockery of this trial. Pilate had desired to wash his hands; man cannot absolve himself of responsibility. Pilate displayed the weakness of government, the Roman power in its weakness, and surrendered to the will of the people, and they said, "Crucify, crucify him", Luke 23: 21. "We will not that this man should reign over us", Luke 19:14. Well, persons make their decisions and have to reap the consequences of them.

Let us join this select band of persons here who have fully committed themselves, declared their allegiance, declared their love and carried out the service that was required to be fulfilled at this time. We can join this company by owning our allegiance, by bowing and by recognising, "Truly this man was Son of God"; that means that He is God in His own person. He is Man; He fulfilled in manhood all that was required, the great and tremendous work of atonement. Think of these hidden sufferings from the sixth hour when darkness enshrouded the whole land until the ninth hour. "About the ninth hour Jesus cried". These three hours we cannot penetrate, but we do know for certain that He drank the cup that was given to Him of His Father. That bitter cup, He drank it. We think of the offerings of the Old Testament, the fire consumed the offering; He consumed the fire. He bore the wrath of God; He bore it for *you*; He bore it for me. It is available to all: "God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". It is simple; it is the way of faith, that we lay hold upon the value and virtue of this great work that has been carried out and we voice our appreciation. We declare who the Christ is. Who is He to each one of us? Can we each here say, 'He is my Saviour; He died for me. And He is truly the Son of God'?

May it be the portion of each for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

23rd January 2022

ANSWERING TO CHRIST

John C Gray

Genesis 41: 53-55

We may say that generally, although thankfully the gospel is still preached, in every place, or most places, there is what these verses speak of as dearth in the land of Egypt, a need for bread. The Lord Jesus, on the other hand, says, "This is the bread which comes down out of heaven", John 6: 50.

There are three things here that I would like to draw attention to particularly in what Pharaoh said. We know from the teaching that this Pharaoh may be taken to represent God in this setting, which is different from what the other Pharaoh was in Exodus; and Joseph is a type of Christ. So that there are three things that are said by Pharaoh: "Go to Joseph", one; "what he says to you", two; "that do", three.

The first thing is, "Go to Joseph". That is an important matter, that we go to Christ for what we need. There is always a tendency to try to look for solutions ourselves, our own way, especially when we get older: the older ones will know that things become difficult and anxieties grow. But I suppose even when you are younger there are anxieties. The need is always to go to Christ. "Go to Joseph": that is the first thing; Christ is the Centre of all God's purposes, all God's promises. "Whatever promises of God there are", Paul tells the Corinthians, "in him is the yea, and in him the amen, for glory to God by us", 2 Cor 1: 20. That is, that He is the Yea and the Amen. There is a certainty about it and a conclusion about it, so that there is no one after, no one else to look to; that is what "the amen" suggests.

So, "Go to Joseph" is very important. Persons in Christendom have gone to all sorts of trouble to make formalities, and look religious in clothing and buildings and all the rest, but they have left out Christ. In these last days, beloved brethren, we need to ensure that in every matter that comes up, whatever it is, we go to Joseph, we go to Christ. That is very important for all of us. It is not just in assembly matters that we find resource in Him, because He is everything for God. Righteousness, reconciliation, and many other things that we could mention, everything that has come out of the heart of God is centred in Him. It has been revealed so that we would understand and know it. "Go to Joseph", go to Christ. It is very important, therefore, that in these last days when there is so much to distract, and so many opinions and

everything else, we go to Joseph. We find the answers in Christ, because God has set Him as Head over all things. It is not just that He is Head to the assembly so that we find our resource and draw our resource from Him, but He “the head of all principality and authority”, Col 2: 10. Whatever there is in the universe God has set Christ as Man over it. Of course it does not mean that God is not supreme, and that will be so in the eternal day when Christ's reign concludes, and He delivers up the kingdom, that God will “be all in all”, 1 Cor: 15: 28. Nevertheless, men will only know God through Christ. So it is, “Go to Joseph”: go to Christ.

So the second thing is, “what he says to you”. Well, what is the Lord saying? He said many things in His lifetime here, of course, many precious things: “Follow thou me”, (John 21: 22), “Abide in me” (John 15: 4), “have love amongst yourselves” (John 13: 35), “this do in remembrance of me”, Luke 22: 19. Many things the Lord said, and He said a lot of things in parables to the crowds too that they might, in the light of the work of God in them, answer to it in repentance. The Lord introduced great and wonderful things. How pleased the Father was not only in the private life of Jesus, which was manifested by His word at the anointing of Jesus in His baptism at the Jordan, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight”, (Matt. 3: 17); there were thirty years of comparatively unknown work and the Father had delight in it. But then God also delighted in what was seen publicly in the way in which the Lord could handle every person that came to Him and heal every person that came to Him who was in need of healing. Wonderful matter that is.

So that it is, “what he says to you”. The words of Christ for us come through the Spirit. Christ is Head of the assembly in heaven, and the Spirit brings to us what the Lord Jesus has in mind for the assembly: “what he says”. So in Revelation He says to the seven assemblies there, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies”, 2:7. Well, the Spirit is saying what He hears in heaven. That is what the Lord Jesus said about Him: “whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”. Wonderful thing that is therefore, that the Lord's speaking is still going on, and that we hear it by the power of the Spirit amongst us. It is important, therefore, that we pay attention to it and grow by it. There is increase; we have said a lot about fruit recently and that is very good and very important too, “the fruit of the lips confessing his name”. So the service of God can take place; we can actually, from

the power of the Spirit in our hearts, express something to God which God is pleased and satisfied with.

So it is important that we listen to what is said from Christ, through the Spirit, at the present time. There has been much that has been expressed. The early believers had it in Jerusalem and round about: “they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers”, Acts 2: 42. And then in the days of recovery we have had much, very diligent ministry, about the Scriptures which is very valuable. The young people should read some of it because that is what the Lord has been saying over the years of the recovery. And He is still saying what is current, and we get that not only in our meetings here but in what is printed, and in what comes through other persons. We see all that as the Lord is speaking to us and giving us the assurance that not only is He soon coming for us, but that He will protect us and see that the work that He has begun in each one of us will go through into completion.

Then the third thing is, “that do”. Well, there is no use hearing the words if we do not do them. We had in Matthew about the two sons. “I go, sir”; that is what one said, but then he did not do it, chap 21: 29. That, of course, was typical of Israel. It could be that there are many that *profess* the name of Jesus saying, “I go, sir”. They may profess that they are believers when in fact they maybe are not; there is no real repentance with them, no faith. It is important that we express what is said to us: “that do”. But then it is not just what comes generally through the gospel, but what may affect us in our assembly life. I struggle for words to express it but what we do is for the pleasure of God. We say things under the power of the Spirit; what the Spirit brings out is good. That is what we do, we express things. We are thankful for the young people who have grown in the past years and the sisters as well. And the sisters should grow in the same way as the brothers who take part. So that the Lord will find that there is a wonderful answer in display in the time to come in relation to persons who have answered to what He has said, “that do”. It is like “this do in remembrance of me”, Luke 22: 19.

Well, it is all very well listening to it but the thing is to do it: “this do in remembrance of me”. That is a word for the young folk in the gospel. There is a word for all of us that we answer to, what the Lord may indicate in ministry by the Spirit. It comes to us in different ways and we are subject to it because kingdom persons who own the Lord

Jesus as Lord are always subject. You never get very far if there is no obedience. God has in mind that when we do that we are in His presence in complacency. Reconciliation has in mind that we are complacent before the presence of God. There is no need for nervousness or want of expression but we are complacent because Christ is our all and our everything.

May we be helped in these things. Despite the dearth that there was in the land of Egypt, Joseph had the bread. It is despite the barrenness that there is in the world which is occupied through Satan with all sorts of things, except God and except Christ, who is the living Bread which has come down out of heaven.

May we be helped for His Name's sake.

Word in Ministry Meeting in Bo'ness

4th November 2021

THE LOVE OF JESUS

Mark I Webster

Galatians 2: 20 (from “I live by faith”)

Proverbs 23: 26

In the thanksgiving for the loaf at the Supper this morning, the scripture was quoted in which, in inaugurating the Supper, the Lord Jesus, in taking the bread said, “This is my body which is given for you”, Luke 22: 19. Reference was made to the greatness of the love that was expressed in that. As we consider the emblems, and particularly the loaf, the enormity of the personal love of the Lord Jesus - what it is, and the way that it has taken Him - no doubt never ceases to affect all of us who break bread. I wanted to draw on this passage in Galatians to speak of that personal love of His. Paul could speak in a very personal way about the Lord Jesus: “the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me”; “for **me**”. The question would be whether every one of us in this hall could write those words. Could you write them? I do not mean, 'Do you have the ability to write?', but could you write them or say them with assurance? That involves certain things that I would like to speak of. It is a very personal matter; God's word in the gospel *is* very personal. No doubt in some places there may be hundreds or even thousands that come under the sound of the word, and we are very glad of that; but whatever the number of persons involved it comes to every one of us *personally*. I also read the passage in Proverbs where Solomon, who in many places in the Scriptures is a type of the Lord Jesus, writes personally by way of an appeal, “My son, give me thy heart”. You will notice that the word “me” appears in both these scriptures. The 'me' in both is very important. Sometimes we may say 'me' and we are seeking to draw attention to ourselves in a willful way. But that is not the case in either of these scriptures that I have read.

Now in the scripture in Galatians, the apostle Paul describes himself as the “chief of sinners” (1 Tim 1: 15 KJV); he recognised what a sinner he was. He recognised that if he was to be set free from the consequences of his sinful history, it involved faith in One, the Son of God, as to whom he could write here, “who has loved me and given himself for me”. Can you say that? It involves that we believe on Him, the Lord Jesus, the One who in His Person is no less than the Son of God. I did not read the whole passage, in which the apostle is addressing a danger amongst those to whom he was writing, but he is bringing out the importance of faith, as to which, in relation to himself,

he could write, "I live by faith"; he now lived on that principle. He was no longer proceeding on the basis of what he could do with his natural ability. He was a Jew, and had been governed by the law. He brings out that no man can be justified on that principle; God justifies the sinner on the basis of faith - faith in the Lord Jesus and His blood. That is very important, that you have faith in Him, and faith in all that He has done for you, including the shedding of His precious blood. Paul could write personally of his faith in the Lord Jesus.

Now I do not want in any way to be misleading or imaginative in what I say, but he is writing as though he was the only sinner in the world, and he writes of the enormity of the *personal* love of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, that had caused Him to give Himself for Paul. It was said in our reading earlier, that although God is a sin-hating God - He must be because of all that He is in His holiness - with sin therefore being an offence to Him, He nevertheless loves the sinner. I want to bring that home to you. Whoever you are, whatever you are, whatever you have done or not done - maybe including ignoring God's word in the past or putting off the matter of your sins to another day, God's love is towards you; and it has been fully demonstrated in the Lord Jesus, God in His Person, who came into manhood in order to give Himself for you, for *you* - as if for no one else in that sense, but for *you*. What that must have meant to the Lord Jesus. He came in order to suffer and to die; and to continue what I am seeking to bring before you as to what is personal, it was in order that He might suffer and die for *you*. Have you thought of that? You may have heard the brethren speak of the wonderful scope and greatness of all that the Son of God has accomplished for God in His mighty work at the cross in suffering, going into death and shedding His precious blood, but He gave Himself for *you*. What love!

I suppose the greatness of the Person of the Lord Jesus must have laid hold of the apostle Paul almost immediately on the Damascus road, because if you read Acts 9 it records that when he received his sight, "straightway in the synagogues he preached Jesus that *he* is the Son of God", Acts 9: 20. He had an immediate impression of the greatness of the One that had appeared to him, appeared to him from the glory, where Jesus is now. How great it is that a divine Person should come into manhood in order to express the fulness of divine love towards you. Persons speak of love and often they confuse love with lust, but the love of God is incomparable in all its greatness. God

Himself *is* love; it is His very nature, and that love has been fully, not partially, expressed in the Son of God. He has expressed that love, and He expresses that love today and He expresses it to you. These words, I am conscious, are very simple, but I trust they help to draw your attention to what is very real and most blessed, the love of God Himself, expressed in the One who came into manhood to give Himself for you. The gospel contains what is truly grand and glorious in its scope and objectives, and how wonderful that is. But it comes right down to each one of us in a personal and simple way that we can all understand.

Now I am not going to speak about you as a sinner, because I hope that you are aware of, and recognise that fact. It would be a foolish person who tried to pretend that he or she was not a sinner. And we are all in that category, and sin has brought in distance from God. God does not want distance between His creature and Himself; He wants His creature to know and experience the blessing and the joy of His presence. You remember that when God set man in the garden of Eden, He came down to see him, to commune with him. You wonder at that, that God, so great, should have an interest in man. He has always had man in His heart to secure him for Himself, and He has always had the Lord Jesus in His heart as the Man of His choice. How wonderful that is. But He came down to commune with man; He wanted the company of man, just as He wants your company. Think of that! How wonderful these things are, that God wants you, and He wants you for Himself. He wants you for His pleasure; He wants you to know the blessedness of an untroubled relationship with Himself in which there is no distance or anything to separate you in any way from Him, and for you to know His love that is expressed in His beloved Son. That is fully possible. So that Paul could say, “has loved me”. He would be right in saying, 'He loves me', but he could look back on his history - no doubt he would look back further than his history and think back to the cross of Jesus; and say with assurance He “loved me” then. Yes, you too were in the heart of the Lord Jesus when He went to the cross to suffer and to die for sinners. His love was fully expressed there, His love for you. He wants you to come into the certainty and joy of that, and the assurance that He gave Himself for *you*. You cannot enjoy love if you do not have the experience of it. But He and His love are available to you.

Now I trust you have come to the Lord Jesus and accepted Him, accepted Him for yourself, as your Saviour. How important that is; in fact, it is essential. There cannot be anything, in one sense, more

essential than that, that you come to the Lord Jesus, the One who has died and has been raised; and that you receive Him and put your faith in His precious blood which was shed there upon the cross. As you do so, God can look upon you as one whose sins have been atoned for, and free of anything relating to you that would otherwise come in the way of a true relationship with Himself. God is free to do so righteously on the basis of your faith in the Lord Jesus and in His precious blood, the One who in the bounty of His love, gave Himself for you. You might ask what was in His heart. The greatness of the fulfilment of God's thoughts in purpose? Of course it was, but how precious to bring it right down to you and me personally, and to be able to say, as Paul could, without any doubt in his mind, "the Son of God who loved me". I ask you again, can you say that? I trust you are a believer on the Lord Jesus, one who can reflect on the fact that the Lord Jesus came into manhood, went to the cross and suffered there, so that you know He bore your sins in His body on the tree, went into death, and shed His precious blood, that you might be cleansed from all unrighteousness. He was raised for your justification, and in that connection, you may say, 'Well, that was because of His love for *me*'.

Persons give presents to one another, and we are thankful for the generosity of those who give those gifts to us. But none of those gifts, however great they may be, can in any way compare with the greatness of the giving that Jesus made when He gave Himself. Nothing less was suitable; only He could settle everything before God. Only He could set you free from your guilt and your sins. Only He could do it. He gave Himself willingly. What love! How precious that is. May it affect your heart; may it win your heart if it is not yet won for Him; may it develop you in affection for Him. May you be able to say, maybe not in the exact words Paul uses here, but say that which corresponds to these twenty words, that "I live by faith ...". That is to be a continuing and present experience of course, and we will not go into that now, but it is sufficient to say that Paul was living on that principle of faith, no longer in his sins, no longer seeking to follow the law and all that would otherwise get in the way. He had been ushered in, as it were, to an area and sphere of life, by faith: "... the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me".

In Proverbs there is another 'me'. I would like to speak of this in relation to the Lord Jesus. "My son, give me thy heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways". The Lord Jesus wants your heart. That really

means your life, I think. The Lord Jesus has demonstrated the greatness of love for you, which is incomparable, and now He wants your heart. He wants it for Himself. As you have the Lord Jesus before you, and you have faith in Him, how are things going to be different? They should be different. We read in the reading of those who are lovers of pleasure, lovers of self, instead of being lovers of God, 2 Tim 3: 4. The Lord Jesus has a claim in love upon you. Does it not appeal to your heart, that the One who in His love has given Himself for you wants you for Himself? Is He not worthy of your heart, your life? He is. No other is more worthy of it than He. How worthy He is! And what an appeal this is, "give me thy heart". I trust that might resonate with everyone here. You young ones here today, give the Lord Jesus your heart; give your life to Him. That is very important, and it is very blessed. It is a very blessed matter no longer to pursue your own will, your own ways and your own natural interests, but to give your life to Jesus. The Lord Jesus would say, "give me thy heart". He wants your life; He wants your all. The Lord Jesus would appeal to everyone to do that, whether we be young or whether we be older. He would say, 'Make a committal to me'. If you have received Him as your Saviour, there is something more; there is something He is looking for and desires; and that is *you*. He wants *you*: He wants your heart, He wants your life to be for Him. If you have never done it before, make that committal tonight, and remain true to it.

And then He says, "let thine eyes observe my ways". What ways are His. Amongst His ways are His ways with those of us who belong to Him. And they are ways of love. We may not always recognise them exactly, but everything that He does towards us is in love. His ways are beyond our ways. God's ways are above our ways as the heavens are above the earth. All His thoughts and ways are, as the scripture brings out, Isa 55: 8-9. His ways are beyond reasoning; but in His love He says "observe" them. What does that mean? Mr Darby's footnote say it means to delight in them. We may not always think that they are delightful, but they are for our good and for our blessing. So the scripture says to observe them, to delight in them. Often tests come - at school, at work, at home - there are these and other spheres, as it were, of our activity and responsibility, and sometimes things may seem hard and troublesome, but they are part of the Lord's ways. Observe them; do not just resign yourself to them. Sometimes we may become a bit stoical about them and may seek as men would speak to just 'Get a grip', but that is not the thought here. I

speaking, I trust, very carefully, but the Lord Jesus was never marked by what is stoical: He felt things. He felt things in His soul. And so do we, and they often affect our spirits. But His ways are to be worked out with Him, for they are His ways in love, and they are for our blessing.

That is all I had to say. If nothing else remains from this preaching, then seek divine help to remember those four words, "give me thy heart" and to follow them up. For His Name's sake.

Buckhurst Hill

30th January 2022

NAME OF JESUS

Derek G Coull

Matthew 1: 21, 23

Acts 3: 4-6

We read this scripture in the Acts of the Apostles this morning where we were gathered, and it gave me some impression as to the greatness of the name of Jesus in relation to this occasion for the gospel preaching. These scriptures in which we have read of the Name of Jesus are very important. It is intended not only to be recognised by us as any other name or a great name - there are many great names in the world; the name of Jesus is not only a great name but it has great meaning and great effect.

Here in Matthew, it says that “thou shall call his name Jesus, for *he* shall save his people from their sins”. So it was to have meaning - great meaning. What a matter that every time that anyone thought of the name of Jesus they were to think of the fact that God had provided a Saviour. That is quite simple, the fact that this name was given so that you might think of God as a Saviour God as seen in Jesus.

And then in our second scripture as to His name, it says His name is “Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, 'God with us'”. So it was not only that Christ was to be seen as a Saviour, but we are to see God Himself in the Person of Jesus. What a matter, that God in His love and in His mercy would not only make provision for us, but He would make Himself known, and want to be known. What a wonderful matter that God wanted to be known.

And then where we read last of all in the Acts of Apostles, the Name of Jesus Christ and His work was to have a practical effect.

The question then that bears upon us is: 'What does the name of Jesus mean to us?'. What does it mean to me, to you, to man in general? What does the name of Jesus mean, because the name of Jesus bears not only upon every person but on every walk of life? We can think of governments of this world and of the powers that be; and we may think of tragedies and of opportunities, all these things: the name of Jesus can have impact and influence on everything.

The name of Jesus means everything to God. Think of that: the satisfaction of the heart of a holy God in the Person of Jesus! It was so much so that the heavens were opened. The heavens had not been

opened in that way before. God had opened them before and had done certain things but never, ever, until Jesus came on to the scene had the heavens been opened and the greatness and glory and the satisfaction of God in one Person been announced. What a Person He must be! And here we have His birth; you might wonder if what is said of Him could not have waited on some evidence of the greatness of the Person. Such was the greatness of the Person of the Lord Jesus that from the point of His birth He was to be marked out as unique, because He was a sinless, holy Person, who was to be One in whom God Himself could be truly seen. There had never been such a one before. What a Person!

And right at the point of His birth God gave this instruction that His name should be called Jesus, for a very specific reason. God knew that this Man was not only His Man - and we must be careful what we say as to the Lord Jesus - but I think it would be right to say that God marked Him out because of His perfection, His glory, and also what He would be able to do. What a Person! If you look at young babies when they are born, you wonder what they are going to be, who they are going to be like, what their characteristics are going to be, and whether they are going to be another person for the testimony. But when it comes to Christ, God marked Him out. Think of that; think of the uniqueness of this Person, and: such was His glory and greatness that the angel could say this of Him, “for *he* shall save his people from their sins”; “*he*” is emphatic. There is no one else: there would be no other name given under heaven, no other name. Think of that: He, He alone.

So this Person is important; more important than any other man, and you should come to know Him. It says “*he*” - God is drawing attention to Him today. He drew attention to Him here, and He is still drawing attention to Him today because He is a Saviour: the Saviour of the world. What a Person! What an opportunity, therefore, we have today. This was not just for that day; there is no time limit attached to this; there is no start and finish here. There will be an end; we will come to that shortly, but as long as we are here “*he*” is still available today. “He”: what a man! “**He shall** save his people from their sins”. It is not 'maybe', not if this happens or if that happens. This is not in the hands of the governments of men: this is God. This is God's statement: “**he shall** save his people from their sins”. What a One, and therefore He is to be known of men, men like you and me. God has made this statement in order that it should be heard and in order that it should be taken up by men, women, boys and girls.

And so we are here today, and this statement has not changed. And God has not changed; Christ has not changed. The sinful state of a human race has not changed. Why did God need to say this? God looked down and saw the state of the human race. He had seen it from Adam and Eve, all the way down through, and nothing had changed; nothing at all. Men may say that society improves. No, it does not; that is just fantasy; it does not improve. Nor does fallen man, and he never will improve. The only time there is any improvement in man's condition is in coming through Christ to God. What a matter to think of - the sorrowful state of man on the one hand, and the greatness of this Man on the other. So there is an opportunity for man to be changed, and be made acceptable before God. It is because of the fact that we are sinners this statement was made: "*He shall save his people from their sins*" - "from their sins".

What about you, friend? Do your sins still trouble you? Are your sins still attached to you? Have you still to account to God for your sins? If you do not know Christ, you will have to answer to God for them. God is a holy God and a righteous God. Some people may say that God cannot be a very loving God if He is going to make man answer for his sins; how can that be a matter of love? Well, if you understand the righteousness of God and the holiness of God then you start to understand the love of God. The love of God has acted in order that His holiness and His righteousness might be maintained, not just for time but for eternity. And they *will be* maintained; there is no question as to that. And so what stands against you being righteous before a holy God is *yourself*. That is the only thing - you: you have a decision to make as to your condition as a sinner before a holy God, and the decision is yours. Nothing will change otherwise, but your decision can make a change before God; think of that.

God today in Christ, is offering to you that He shall save *you* from *your* sins. This becomes intensely personal. God is presenting in the glad tidings a Saviour in this Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is presenting Him to you and me today. He is presenting Him to the whole world, in order that man may stand righteously before a holy God eternally. It is not just for a short period of time; that is not the thought here. The thought here is that God has a remedy that is going to last and can be acceptable to Him for eternity. Such is the value and the greatness and the glory of Christ.

The greatness and the glory of the work that Christ has done on

the cross for God is enough to satisfy God eternally! - in order that *you* might stand before a holy God eternally and be acceptable to Him according to the glory and the excellence of a holy God. What a matter! What about you, friend? Have you got that portion? Have you got that certainty in your heart?

So we see here a Saviour. And then it says, “Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, 'God with us'”. Christ came here to evidence the love of God. Think of that; think of the life of Christ; think of the work that was effected in order that this statement could be made that “*he* shall save his people from their sins”. Think of the Lord Jesus Christ walking according to the will of God - going even to the cross, that very place, and manifesting “God with us”. Such was His glory and His greatness and His power and the efficacy of what He has done that it was evident that God was there amongst men, showing forth the love of God in everything that He did and every step that He took. He was showing it forth in order that the love of God could be made known and would have an effect. And so we see “God with us” in Him.

When He was reviled did He revile again? No. You think of the movements and the evidence of God in Christ that could be physically seen amongst men at that time. What a thing to behold! And you too can behold Him today by faith. Think of the greatness of that. Some might say Christ is historic; He is not a mere historic Man. He is a Man that lives in glory today; He is the only Man that is alive in glory today according to God. There will be others like Him, but today Christ is in heaven, a glorified Man and a Saviour. And He is there today because of the efficacy and the greatness of the work He completed on God's behalf. He was not as Man amongst men, but God was with men. Think of that. He went to the cross and took up your liabilities and my liabilities; He took them upon Himself and suffered the wrath of a holy God and died, in order that this great matter of sin should be answered for; and in order that this great opportunity of salvation should be offered today to you and to me.

And so it is, “God with us”. What a matter to think that God went to such an extent as that to present Himself to man in the nearest possible of circumstances: not in power from heaven, not in a lightning strike, not in any other thing which He could quite easily have done, and quite rightly have done. He had the authority to do it, but He chose to come in and evidence His love in a Man in order that He could sacrifice Him for your sins and for mine. And in order that He could offer to you

free forgiveness from your sins; so that He could have you as a righteous person before Him eternally: what a matter!

And so we find where we read in the Acts of the Apostles that salvation works out practically; this is nothing fanciful; this is not just a story. It is not just that He was to be a Saviour for our sins. He was amongst men and the evidence God's love, but He is to have an effect in lives, and that is still so today. And so this man proved it; he got the blessing of it. Peter says, "in the name of Jesus". There is power in the Name, wonder-working power in the name of Jesus. If you will come to know this Person today, if you come to appreciate the work that He has done, and come to appreciate the value of His precious shed blood, you will find what this wonder-working power is. For this man - it was instantaneous. It says that he sprang up, and his ankle bones were made strong. And the effect of it was seen in testimony. That is what we enjoyed this morning; not only was the man made well but he was brought into great blessing and privilege before God. The gospel is not just about salvation from our sins,; it does not just relieve you from your sins but it brings you into every blessing according to the great thoughts of God. God has given us a foretaste of everything according to His desires and according to His will. And He has given us the opportunity to taste of everything as if in eternal conditions already. What a God!

And so this man was just starting out, but he entered into the great centre of it in this great matter of praise. He was hoping to get something of this earth from Peter and John. "Silver and gold I have not; but what I have, this give I to thee: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaræan rise up and walk. And having taken hold of him by the right hand he raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God". Praising God: there is an outcome for God. And I would that there would be an outcome for God in each and every one of our hearts today.

What a result! This is the result that God is looking for, the result that He was looking for when Christ was born, and the result that He was looking for when Christ walked amongst men. This is the result He was looking for when Christ was on the cross, and the result He is looking for today in your heart and in my heart. Is this for your benefit? Yes, but for His glory eternally, most definitely. And is it for His praise and for His worship now? Yes, such is the greatness of the work of God and the love of God that we may enter now into the very presence of

God Himself and be at home there in relationship with God, at a level which is acceptable to a holy God. It has to be in Christ.

Do we know what it is to have a relationship with God in Christ? We may know what it is to be freed from our sins, and to be set at liberty before a holy God. You might know an element of it. If we are to enter into it, we need the gift of God's Holy Spirit. Your own resources are not any use: this is not an earthly matter, we are now talking about a heavenly matter, and an eternal matter. They are God's matters, and if you are to enjoy and enter into these things in fulness then you need to have what God provides. You need God's blessed Holy Spirit, the power, the wherewithal. The blessed Holy Spirit helps you to enter into spiritual things, and enjoy them according to the mind of God.

Well, so it will be eternally. When does the day of grace end? We are not told. And, friend, you do not know either: if you are still in your sins, what a terrible thing to think that it might end very shortly; it might end now. What a thing that the Lord could come today and take us to be with God eternally. Sometimes we sing, 'Eternity's begun' (Hymn 94) because we feel it in our spirits, and we enjoy it in our spirits, but one day we will know it in actuality. And, friend, if you are still in your sins, you know nothing about this, or enter into the enjoyment of it. Be sure of this that God is not going to change His mind: He has sent Jesus Christ; He proved His love to man, having Him amongst men. He has proved His love to man; He has proved His thoughts to man; and His purpose and His counsel to man. Indeed, and He has gone further than that: He has brought man into the secret of His own affections. But if you are still in your sins, you will know nothing about it. Be sure that God will *require an account from the sinner*; you will be challenged if you have a remedy. And when you do not have a remedy, and you refused His remedy, you will be condemned in your sins. He gave the opportunity of His love and *you* chose not to accept it. So now a holy and a righteous God is a judge. What a matter to think that these things will come about. One who does not know Christ as your Saviour will come under judgment, be condemned by God, condemned to an eternity in hell. Now men do not like to talk about these things, but the gospel is about you and God; it is about our sinful state before a holy God, and it is about our eternal salvation.

And so today God is offering the gospel again. What a God! How many times has He offered it? Once? The hymn says,

Once, yea twice, He may have spoken (Hymn 253).

You might have to say it is not just once or twice but thousands of times. How many times have you heard the gospel? Do not turn away from God; do not refuse His offer of a Saviour today, because you may not get another opportunity. God in His love and His mercy not only seeks you as a Saviour God, but that you might come to know Him in a relationship which suits God Himself. And that is what is available to us all. That is what is available to every man today. God's resources are infinite, and He has the basis to forgive every single one that comes to Him today. He has room in His presence to accept all. What a wonderful resource God has. Resources are tight in this world, and space is tight, and things are changing. No so with God: God has room for all, and He is waiting with hands outstretched today to bless all. If you do not know the blessing of God, come to Him today through Christ and enter into this blessing.

The gospel takes us from simply knowing Christ as Saviour into the blessing of relationship, sonship before a holy God; and the opportunity to share with saints here on earth the great things of God, to know what it is to enjoy these secrets. Then the greatness of it opens up to us in Ephesians, which speaks of the greatness of Christ and the assembly. All these things are to be enjoyed by the believer. What a God! He gives us it all freely.

May we enter into it, and may God receive His portion, for His Name's sake.

Loanhead

29th August 2021

“BEHOLD”

Alan A Croot

John 1: 29 (from “Behold”)

John 19: 6 (to “man”), 14 (from “Behold”)

Matthew 25: 6 (from “Behold”)

I want to begin by asking a question, and begin where I read last: how would you feel if the Lord Jesus were to come right now? Are you ready to go? Am I ready to go? Am I ready to leave everything, *everything*, and be with Him now? I trust every soul in this room is ready, right now, to go.

I began at the beginning of John's gospel - the incoming of the Lord Jesus in His public life here. The Lord Jesus could speak later as to the men who went out into the wilderness to see John the baptist, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed moved about by the wind?”, Matt 11: 7. He questions them, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see?”. What John saw was the One whom he had been speaking about, the One of whom he said, “the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to unloose” (John 1: 27), the Lord Jesus Himself, God's beloved Son. He says, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. Could there be a greater proclamation in this world than that? “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”; that proclamation is going out in the glad tidings tonight. He is still proclaimed to men: “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. He is still there in all His glory and His greatness; He is still the Lamb of God, and He is still able to take away the sin of the world. Indeed, the work of salvation is already completed, and it is a question for you: will you set your eyes upon the Lord Jesus? Will you accept that your sins have been borne by Him, every one of them, every detail of every one of them, and that He has removed them forever from the sight of God, having borne God's righteous judgment upon all that you and I have done? John the baptist was able to introduce the Lord Jesus to this scene in His public service, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”.

Who was he introducing? The stories that come out in the gospels had not yet happened. I suppose the only things that are recorded for us up to this point when John the baptist speaks are the wonderful incoming of the Lord Jesus, Mary being with child of the Holy Spirit, the babe born, no room for them in the inn, His being laid in a

manger, and Herod seeking to destroy the Lord Jesus as a king coming to this scene. Then we read of Him being about His Father's business in that wonderfully attractive picture of the Lord Jesus as a boy of twelve. His parents sought Him out, and He said, "Did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", Luke 2: 49. What does it tell us of the Lord Jesus at that point? It tells us that He was "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers and hearing them and asking them questions", v 46. I have often wondered about that. It says, "And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers", v 47. Most boys of twelve would probably be asking what this meant and what that meant, but I do not think the Lord Jesus was asking questions like that. I think He was asking those men as to their own testimony. He was asking them as to their own faithfulness as a witness here to God Himself. He knew what the answers were. Maybe He was questioning these men to see where they stood themselves. "And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers".

And none of us fully knows nor understands what the thirty years of this Man's perfect life upon this earth meant to God. God had waited for generations for four thousand years since the coming in of Adam to this point. What had God found? It says in the Psalms, "Jehovah looked down from the heavens upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God", Ps 14: 2. Is there not a plea that strikes in your own soul as you read a verse like that, God looking "down from the heavens ... to see if there were any that did understand"? Think of God looking upon every heart and every soul from Adam down to this point and seeing "if there were any that did understand", if there were any that sought after Him. Then it says, "They have all gone aside, they are together become corrupt; there is none that doeth good, not even one", v 3.

This was the world into which the Lord Jesus came; and what did God see in the Person of the Lord Jesus here during those thirty years of communion between Him and God Himself? God saw a Man perfect before Himself, a Man "holy, harmless, undefiled" (Heb 7: 26), a Man who pursued not His own will but the will of God, ever subject to Him, ever in communion with Him. We read this morning of the Lord Jesus and the way in which He always fulfilled the Father's will, and the Father's love was upon Him. What joy, what communion there was between the Lord Jesus and His Father! He, God's beloved Son, was taken account of, as God Himself looked down, and here in the midst of

the darkness of the world in which we are, there was a light, a light which Paul could later speak of as “light above the brightness of the sun”, Acts 26: 13. That was how the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul, but think of how the Lord Jesus appeared to God! How wonderful that light must have been to God, seeing this Man here on this earth. John could say, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. What a Man had come into this scene, dear friend! He had come in in love for you and me; His holiness and His perfection were vital for our hope, because the sacrifice had to be perfect. The Lord Jesus alone is the One to whom sin never attached.

How wonderful is the Person of the Lord Jesus! No wonder He is introduced in this way, “Behold”. Do you know the word “behold” is used about one hundred and fifty times in these gospels? Why is that? What does it mean? It means to look upon something that is *very* special. We do not often use the word because we do not often have to do with things that are very special; the things of our life are often mundane. But the introduction here was of One who was not of this world, “a root out of dry ground”, Isa 53:2. The Lord Jesus drew nothing from this scene, but everything from His Father - “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”.

When the Lord Jesus was in the hands of a Roman judge, he said to the people, “Behold the man!”. That was the same Person, three years after John the baptist had introduced Him, but it was the same Person, despite having had to do with lepers, tax-gatherers, and sinners, utterly undefiled by the world into which He had come. Had He changed? He changes not, dear hearer, and His love has not changed either. It is the same Man, taken by wicked hands and rejected: “He came to his own, and his own received him not”, John 1: 11. What about you? Have you received Him? Have you received Him into your life? Have you made Him the very centre of your life, or have you brought Him into your life and kept Him just at the edge? Do you have to do with Him occasionally, or has He become your life? One writer in scripture says, “Christ ... who is our life”, Col 3: 4. Is He your life? I ask myself if He is my life. Has He to do with everything that I occupy myself with? You may say you have to do with other things - we all do - but do you always come back to the One upon whom you can draw, who would feed you, love you, nurture you, direct you, guide you, care for you, protect you. Think what this Man of whom Pilate speaks to those around him, the Lord Jesus, has done! Think of the change He had brought into souls' lives, His disciples for a start! He called them, and

they went. They let go of their fishing nets, their occupation, their parents; they went. Are you willing to answer the call of the Lord Jesus like that, or do you want to carry on for a bit longer with what is your life?

I ask you again the question, I think it is vital *tonight*: are you ready to go, or is there something of this world that you want to stay for? It may be too late if you do that. I urge you, have to do with the Lord Jesus afresh tonight and be sure before Him and in His presence that you want to go with Him. If there are doubts in your mind, the One to speak to about it is Himself. There may be some benefit in talking to someone in this room; you may get good advice, but I would urge you to speak to the Lord Jesus Himself. Ask Him to help you to let go; to let go of the world around you, and commit yourself to Him. These men *would* not have to do with the Lord Jesus. But there was that woman with the flux of blood for twelve years. She had given all her living. She had lived in great difficulty; she only touched the hem of His garment. That was all that was necessary; her life had been changed, Luke 8: 34, 44. Souls had been fed, five thousand men sitting down at once, fed with a few fishes and loaves; their lives had been changed, chap 9: 13-16. They would never forget that. Lepers cleansed, lame given to walk, blind given to see, all these things we know speak of the ravages of sin upon mankind, and the Lord Jesus was able for every circumstance, chap 7: 22. Let us not forget what was said at the end of John's gospel, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written", John 21: 25. Do you believe that? The greatness of the work of Christ is such that "not even the world itself would contain the books written". And here a Roman judge says, "Behold the man!".

Later he says, "Behold your king!". I ask you another question: is He your king? Is the Lord Jesus your king? Do you look at Him like that? You may say, 'Well, this is Britain. He was saying that to the Israelites, the Jewish people'. Yes, I understand that. But is He your king also? Are you prepared to allow Him to rule over your life? He is not like the queen of England, who many of us here have never seen, who lives in a palace down in London, one hundred and fifty miles away. He was not a king or queen like that. I mean a king who you know personally, who is involved in your life, to whom you are prepared to answer for every moment of your life. He is a King who rules in an absolutely righteous way. He rules perfectly. To accept the Lord Jesus as your King is a very wonderful thing. You accept that you belong to

Him, as subject to Him, that you owe everything you have to Him; your resources, everything. Your hope is entirely in Him. He is not a king like this world's kings and queens. Our own queen, much as we may respect her and rightly so, is an elderly lady. We do not expect her to be here forever. I am speaking to you about the Lord Jesus. I am speaking to you about God's beloved Son, a Man who lives in glory, a Man who will live forever and never die, never change: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end," Rev 21:6. The Lord Jesus is to be your King, and your Friend, forever. I wonder whether you bring Him into your life; whether you are prepared to do what these people would not do, and that is subject themselves to the Lord Jesus. And that is Lord's day, it is Monday; and it is Tuesday; and it is Wednesday and Thursday and Friday, Saturday, all day, every day, forever. Are you quite ready for that? Because there is no greater blessing than giving up this world altogether. If you can but let go, dear friend, you will find you will be recompensed infinitely more than anything this poor world can give, and you will find that all this world gives, does not satisfy you. But the Man I am speaking about is able to satisfy your heart, able to satisfy your affections, able to satisfy your earnest longing. He is able to give you peace; He is able to give you rest, and give you things that this world knows nothing of.

What were they about to do? Pilate says, "Behold the man!" and "Behold your king!" They were about to take Him and crucify Him. If you will not have to do with the Lord Jesus yourself, if you will not allow Him to fill your life, I suggest you should think very carefully about these men who took Him and crucified Him, because you may be rejecting Him also. Let none of us be found here as those who reject such a glorious and attractive Saviour, the One whom God has provided for all of us.

The Lord Jesus was taken and nailed to a cross, spat upon, buffeted, and hung there, left to die. That was man's treatment of this Man of whom I have spoken, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". That is the world's treatment of the Lord Jesus. That should speak to my heart about this world in which I live. We are in this world and we cannot get out of it; I totally accept and understand that, but my feelings and desires as in this world should be influenced by the fact that this very world and the people in it have crucified the Lord of glory. Let us not find our resource in this world! It can only end in disaster. Let us find our resource in the Lord Jesus because He is no longer there upon that cross. He was there.

As we know, there are two sides. There is the side of man's rejection, "Take him away, take him away, crucify him", John 19: 15, and "We will not that this man should reign over us" Luke 19: 14. Then there is the side of the Lord Jesus in the garden, "Father, if thou wilt remove this cup from me:- but then, not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. The Lord Jesus was there upon that cross to fulfil the will of God, and we know there, in circumstances of great suffering and rejection; as the hymn-writer says, 'Truly alone!' (Hymn 268), He was made sin on your account and mine. We know all too well the flesh which rises up, "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life", 1 John 2: 16. The Lord Jesus had to bear sins Himself, and He did it for every one who trusts Him. How does that leave your heart and your soul? He did it willingly; He did it in love. He says as to those who took Him and crucified Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 34. The love of the Lord Jesus is so great, but I speak carefully, it is foreign to us naturally. It is not like the love of this world; it is utterly different. I want to be careful about that. I do not want the love of the Lord Jesus to be foreign to you in the sense that you do not know it, but it is utterly different from what we know in this world. It is a love that took us in, that covers everything; it is a love that will never die. Whatever your life, whatever your sins, whatever your sorrowful history, the love of the Lord Jesus towards you, as the manifestation of God's love; it remains the same, despite all we are worthy of, which is quite simply, death: "For the wages of sin is death", Rom 6: 23. Let us never get away from that. We must accept that in all that we are there is not one iota of anything or any one outside of Christ that God finds attractive. The Lord Jesus Himself is the only Man in whom God has found His delight - His complete and perfect delight. That same Man was crucified upon a cross, made sin for you and me, bore God's judgment due to you and me, and laid down His life, exercising the authority that was His and His alone to go into death. In going into death, He has taken death's sting away. He met and defeated the power of Satan.

Have you ever thought of what Joseph of Arimathæa was given to do, to take the body of the Lord Jesus Himself? God stirred up a man in affection, to seek that precious body. Was there anything greater on this earth at that point, than the body of Christ? He took that body and laid it in a new tomb; such was the working of God that He prepared a man to do this. The stone was rolled against the door and the Jews wanted to maintain their story. Did the story end there? It never could,

dear friend. This was the Lord of glory. The stone was rolled away. When Mary comes to that tomb in the morning, the stone had been rolled away, the tomb empty, the angel says, "Why seek ye the living one among the dead?", Luke 24: 5. That is what we do when we take pleasure in this world: we look for what is living amongst what is dead. Our hope is in Christ, a Man living outside of this scene. Up from the grave He arose by the might of the Father. What does He say to Mary? "I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20: 17. I suppose the greatness of the glad tidings is almost more than man can take in. Think of all we have done, which deserves eternal damnation, banishment from the sight of God into the eternal lake of fire: that is what is due to you and me. And instead of that, God is offering you in the glad tidings a Saviour who has died in your place to bring you into relationship with Himself, such that He knows you as a son, and you inherit with His Son. It is almost too great for the mind to take in. Lay hold of it, dear friend! It is true. Such is the goodness of God; He wants to bring you into that relationship.

And so I read the last scripture, a picture of these ten virgins waiting for one man to come in. Five of them were ready, and five of them were not. Then the cry comes, "Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him". I am going to ask you again: are you ready to go right now? Are you ready for this cry? The cry we will hear is the assembling shout of Christ; that is what believers will hear. That is like this cry, "Behold, the bridegroom". You may say the cry here is not of the Lamb of God, or the Man, or the King; this is the Bridegroom. Such is the greatness of God's thoughts for you and me that there should be a vessel in this dispensation formed of those who have found in Christ a Saviour, and in the Holy Spirit a resource from outside of this world, and that vessel is formed into one glorious and perfect, harmonious body that answers to the heart of Christ. Do you apprehend the body of Christ here on earth? Do you know something of those bridal affections for the Bridegroom? Do you know something of the Bridegroom's affections for those who form part of this wonderful vessel here, a relationship that God would have us enter into with His beloved Son and be here as a testimony while Christ is no longer here? The bride of Christ.

Mr Pellatt has a poem, which I recommend to you (see page 32), which he wrote on board ship travelling across the Atlantic. He had watched the sun set, which he likens to Christ in His glory leaving this

earth, and then he writes of the moon rising and he likens it to the assembly reflecting the light and glory of Christ shining on in the absence of the Lord Jesus here in this scene. That is the portion of all those who trust in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and who know the Holy Spirit. All, myriads of souls, most we do not know and have never heard of, such is the greatness and the glory of that which answers to Christ here today, and the cry will soon come, "Behold, the bridegroom".

What a day that will be, and we will leave everything, and go. Are you ready to leave everything? We do not get to choose; it is not like moving house and reducing your stuff: your stuff is gone. What you will take with you is your knowledge of, and all that is formed after, the Lord Jesus Himself. Your thoughts of love, your thoughts of affection, your appreciation of His glory, of His greatness as the Lamb of God, as you find Him in Revelation, "a Lamb standing, as slain" (chap 5: 6), of Christ as King, of Christ in His glory and the Father and His love, the Father's house 'with its love and light and song' (hymn 154), all these things which we spoke of earlier today and experienced indeed in the presence of God Himself. These things are ours. They are a treasure which belongs to us and no one can take them away. Those things go on, and everything else is left behind.

I have read from passages which are all well-known to every one of us here in this room. Let us all be ready for the coming of the Bridegroom! Let us be ready to follow the exhortations in the glad tidings to "behold"; not glance at, behold, and let us answer to the Lord Jesus today! May it be so for His Name's sake!

Birmingham

28th November 2021

THE SUN AND THE “SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

Joseph Pellatt

PART I

The king went down in the glorious west,
He had brightened the world with his shining,
From his chariot of gold he lowered his crest,
To the queen of the night now resigning.

Then the pale-faced beauty ascending the throne,
Reigned peacefully over the darkness;
For she borrowed her ray from the absent one,
And shone faithfully on as his witness.

Fair Venus in full evening dress was there,
And the comet afar in its glory,
Combined to produce, in brilliance so rare,
A scene far surpassing all story.

PART II

The King went down on the shameful tree,
He had brightened the world with His shining;
Mid suffering and blood the Victor was He,
To His people the light now resigning.

If Christians His faithful witness would be,
And shine here for Him in night's confine,
They must keep close to Him, His glory to see,
And live in His heavenly sunshine.

[Written after watching a sunset.]

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