

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

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JL The thought in mind is that we might be stimulated in our enquiry into the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the purposes of God. Running parallel with that we should consider the pleasure God has in those who do consider these things. This is a very precious verse that we have read from Psalm 106, indicating the majestic greatness of God, spanning eternity with His infinite greatness. The Psalmist says, “let all the people say, Amen!”. It is not just a statement of fact concerning God's greatness but an invitation that the people should join in and consider it, and that there should be some response to God on account of it. We might ask if we are not always to be engaged in seeking to grow in the knowledge of divine Persons and of the thoughts of divine love. We always have need to pursue that, and I take the liberty of saying so because perhaps no assembly had greater knowledge of divine things than those in Ephesus. Paul writes to the saints there, however, telling them that he was praying for them so that they might come into full knowledge and that the eyes of their hearts might be enlightened, Eph 1: 15-18. If there was need for them, to whom the whole range of divine counsel had been set forth, to grow in the knowledge of God, and of Paul's earnest prayers to God in relation to that, then surely we can say it is appropriate in regard of us.

When we come to Exodus, we read of Moses, interested because of what he had seen. I am very encouraged by this passage because as he paused to consider and enquire he grew more and more in the knowledge of God. Firstly it says, “the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him”, but then we are told God spoke to him: “Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, and God called to him”; then came the unfolding of this wonderful name “I AM THAT I AM”.

David in Psalm 27 says, “One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to enquire of him in his temple”. There is something very attractive about that, governing all the days of our lives, and a continual desire to make holy enquiry. Today is one of the days. May the Lord encourage us today to enquire

in His holy temple, to take account of the beauty of Jehovah and to learn.

Then in Corinthians we have Paul's desire for the saints that they should seek to grow in the understanding of the things that the Spirit of God reveals to those that love God. We could have read from Ephesians where Paul prayed for the enlightenment of the Ephesians. I was interested to read from Corinthians because these things are revealed to those who love God, not just those whom God loves because He clearly loves all His saints. Do we love Him sufficiently, and have we sufficient affection of heart and interest to pursue the holy things that the Spirit of God would serve us in relation to? Might that be of profit for us?

AEM It is very stimulating for our affections to think on it. The linking here in Psalm 106 of "Jehovah the God of Israel" with "from eternity and to eternity" should be a great stimulus to our hearts. There is no apparent necessity for such a full title: maybe "Jehovah" would have been sufficient or even "God" but it is "of Israel": His people are involved.

JL Yes. A similar expression is used at the end of another book of the Psalms, Ps 41: 13. It does not say in that section, "And let all the people say, Amen! Hallelujah!". This particular verse at the end of this book interests me because such a God, so great and majestic, desires that we might grow in the knowledge of Himself. Our affections should be stirred within us in view of yielding response to God. I might say that the Psalms have been divided into books, and the fourth book of the Psalms largely bears on the recovery of God's people. If anyone has the interest to read the rest of Psalm 106, evidence will be noted of that very fact. It shows the wonderful triumph that God has wrought in the recovery of His saints, seeking to bring us all back into the knowledge of Himself in a greater way. Some may have departed, or at times have wandered or grown cold in their affections, but such is the activity of divine grace that God would draw us back to Himself in view of the increase in knowledge of His greatness.

AEM Yes; it is, "let **all** the people say". They all remained there. You referred in prayer to many Christians maybe with whom we do not and cannot walk, who may be seeking the truth today. This is in view here of letting all the people say, "Amen!".

JL That is right; we need to be respectful of others. I know of

others who are gathered today in similar occasions as we are and God's eye is undoubtedly upon them too. We cannot walk with all but we need to have respect for the work of God and the interest God has amongst all His saints.

JW Would you help us as to how we begin in the knowledge of God?

JL Well, for most of us that has perhaps commenced with us having to do with God in relation to our sinful history. It may be we have had appreciation in some way of God as Creator, and in a general way that is true of men. Paul felt free to speak about that to those in Athens who had no real knowledge of having to do with God personally. He spoke to them about God as Creator and in a sense all men have some knowledge of that. The heavens themselves bear witness to God's eternal power and divinity. Then we are brought to know God through conviction within our hearts that we are sinners and have to do with a holy God. Gradually we are brought to learn of His love expressed in the presenting of Christ as the mercy-seat and grow bit by bit.

JW What you say is helpful. You spoke of lovers of God; initially it is through the conscience; then it is through the heart.

JL Part of our exercise today is to grow in the knowledge of God and the purposes of His love for us. We will make little progress in divine things without affection.

JW I am sure that would be right. The way in which God has come out towards us in grace, and to know His love, would cause something in our hearts in response to Himself.

RDP It is Job who said, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee", Job 42: 5. The knowledge would extend to more than hearing about God. Everybody here today has heard of God by the hearing of the ear to some degree, but Job was being taken somewhere far further on than that.

JL That is good. If we read through the book of Job it is very evident that Job was very knowledgeable about a great many things. Until formation in our hearts takes place there is nothing of real substance secured by way of an answer to God's own desires for us.

RDP You have linked it with "let all the people say, Amen! Hallelujah!"; the knowledge of God must not fall short of the fact that there is to be an answer. There is to be an answer to Himself. You go on in Scripture

and you find there were the lovers of God. We have probably all here made a start: we have heard of Him.

JL It really is the life of the believer: “And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent”, John 17: 3. It really is our life to know God, and time has never changed the Diet: from eternity to eternity God is God. What do I know about God? Am I growing in the knowledge of God?

IMcK I was thinking of what you said about affection, the importance of affection. As we think about what you are laying before us, it feels daunting to have an appreciation of God and of His purposes but affection would get us moving.

JL I think that. What helps us in growing in affection towards God? One thing I can say from my own experience as Paul could say is that, “mercy was shewn me”, 1 Tim 1: 13. A deep appreciation of the mercy of God endears our hearts towards God and the appreciation of the love of Christ that has reached out towards us. Then as we grow it is part of the constant service of the Holy Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in our hearts. That would be in view of the development and enlargement of our hearts. Such are our hearts that they are capable of expanding and the Spirit of God would shed abroad the love of God there and help us to be developed in the love of God and grow in affection.

DJW What is your understanding of this word “Blessed”?

JL It is the way God has set Himself to make us eternally happy. That is the activity of the blessing of God towards us. When such an expression is used as “Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel”, it is the response of the creature towards God as in the enjoyment of His blessing, with a heart flowing out and returning answer towards God.

DJW I was thinking of what we have said about growing in our knowledge. I suppose that, after mercy, we begin to understand grace. I wondered if this title “Blessed” involved that; God has not changed but He has come out in view of a return. “He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things”, Eph 4: 10. It is always in that One.

JL We are not possessed of any true ability to yield our hearts in the blessedness of divine praise towards God without some appreciation within our own affections of the love of God towards us. The flow of divine love towards us is what forms our affections in view of

becoming responsive towards God.

DJW It seems that affection and intelligence go hand in hand. Mary perhaps was not too understanding as to the Lord's resurrection but she soon became intelligent to the fact of the greatest knowledge that had ever been conveyed to a person.

JL We have often been taught that where there is affection, intelligence would normally come and would grow.

TM The Thessalonian saints would help us as to how to arrive at a knowledge of God. It says they turned to God and they were, "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ", 1 Thess 1: 1. They grew in their affection towards God.

JL A review of the many doxologies we have in Scripture would help us to see that the responsive outbursts of heart, particularly from Paul, but not exclusively, largely show that it was because of intelligent knowledge of God. Yet a depth was reached in Paul's heart that caused him, while pondering over things, to rise in expression of holy worship to God.

MJW I read this week that the godly man is the beginning of the Psalms. It has been said that the Psalms properly speaking close with Psalm 119, and that those that follow are supplementary, see FER vol 11 p72. In that psalm, the idea of the godly man is filled out extensively. It would link with "we speak wisdom among the perfect" (1 Cor 2: 6), which may have the sense of 'full-grown', Phil 3: 15 and note. God does arrive at His end. That psalm is very extensive.

JL What would characterise a godly man?

MJW Piety, and we grow in our appreciation of the blessed God as He intervenes in our circumstances. We learn to rely on Him and to trust Him. Is that not a very good base to work from?

JL Yes, David the writer of many of the Psalms was a godly man, a man after God's own heart; a man who was formed through experience with God. That would lead us to Exodus 3 because Moses went through several periods of extended exercise in his life. There was the period of forty years that he had in the palace but then there was another period of forty years that immediately preceded chapter 3 of Exodus. These times would be in view of formation and godly features.

MJW I always think it is deeply touching that God, great as He is,

should tell Moses about His Name. He does not speak of “Jehovah” first, the name of relationship, but He tells him about His eternal existence. I think that is deeply touching.

JL This wonderful name greatly interests me, “I AM THAT I AM”. Perhaps it is the closest expression that we have in Scripture to what is absolute. The fact that God says it shows that He was addressing someone; so there is a relative aspect to it. I do not want to go into water that is too deep but the expression itself does not give a reference to anything else, just the majestic statement about God's own greatness. It interests me that Moses had such an interest to look at a burning thorn-bush. Think of God coming so near in such humble lowly circumstances. We might say, 'Should he not have had an interview with God in a palace or some place of majestic greatness rather than at a thorn-bush?'. Moses took an interest in that and as he approached where the Angel of Jehovah appeared he hears God speaking to him, as he continues considering. Stephen in the Acts uses that expression, he considered, “he went up to consider” this great sight, chap 7: 31. God finally tells him this wonderful Name. That should stimulate us to seek after God and grow in the knowledge of God.

AMcK Can you help us as to the words of Moses, “Let me now turn aside and **see** this great sight”? Help us as to Moses's actions here.

JL I am glad you raised that because it is part of my exercise today. I have no doubt that almost everyone from school days upwards would find themselves under considerable pressure and time is very precious; and we may just say we really have not time. We may find that so many things rise to disadvantage us in spending time enquiring and seeking after God. I do not wish to occupy brethren with myself but I can say that in my own working experience I have known what it is to spend less than one minute some days in sitting down just to open the Scriptures and yet I found something choice that filled my heart for the rest of the day. I have known that time and again. God greatly values the interest in our hearts just to take a moment to seek after Himself.

RWF Is that the effect of contemplation of God as “from eternity and to eternity”. It is interesting that the fourth Book of Psalms commences with the prayer of Moses in which that expression is found, “from eternity to eternity thou art God”, Ps 90: 2. We have drawn attention to the fact it comes at the end of the book. Does it help us to enter into a realm where in a sense time is suspended?

When time shall cease to be (Hymn 119 and 286).

Do you think that is essential if we are to come more to the knowledge of God? The Spirit would help us in that.

JL The beginning of this contact was observation on the part of Moses. It shortly proceeded to the point of communion with God and the revelation of God's great name "I AM THAT I AM". That is progress.

RWF Does the fact it was made known to Moses suggest that God knew that he had reached the point where he could begin to grasp it?

JL God greatly values interest in our hearts to learn of Himself. I would seek to encourage all; I am not particularly here to address young people in contrast to all of us, but if the younger brethren have an interest in their hearts to seek after divine things it will prove to be profitable and draw out divine blessing. We cannot put divine Persons under obligation, none of us can; but I can say from my own experience, and there are older brethren sitting around me who know from their experience, that God honours the spirit of enquiry in our hearts and the desire to pursue the knowledge of Himself.

JW What would be the significance of the thorn-bush burning but not being consumed?

JL One thing that I associate in my mind with that thought is the way God has come near in Christ to draw near to men. Men were not consumed by the presence of the Lord Jesus here, because He came in lowly grace to move amongst men. God has come near: "God has been manifested in flesh", 1 Tim 3: 16. The thorn-bush has that bearing in not being consumed.

JW I was thinking of the incarnation, the way that God has come out in Christ and the way He has come out in the death of Christ. In John it says, "we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father", chap 1: 14. I wondered if that is in line with Moses turning aside here to "see this great sight". The incarnation is a great sight.

JL Yes, it is a great sight. Moses had the interest to consider this sight and pursue, and what a reward he gained.

AMB I was thinking of the scripture in Hebrew 11, "he is a rewarder of them who seek him out", v 6. You would encourage us to go into the presence of God and enquire of Him. Ask Him to show us things and to tell us things. We can be quite simple about it.

JL That is a very appropriate scripture. I would like to say again that none of us can put God under obligation. God is God; He possesses sovereign rights; but He is “a rewarder”. He takes account of desire. That is what marked Moses here. One can hardly think of a greater reward according to the dispensation than to have this word from God, “I AM THAT I AM”.

AMB God saw that he turned aside. It says that “Jehovah saw that he turned aside” and called to him. We need to be interested and enquiring in our hearts, with our ears ready to hear what God might say to us.

JL Yes. I made reference earlier to the way that Stephen recalls this particular point in the life of Moses. In Acts 7, “Moses seeing it wondered at the vision; and as he went up to consider it, there was a voice of the Lord, / am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. And Moses trembled, and durst not consider it”, v 31, 32. That interested me as he had the interest to consider it but then he almost felt, ‘This is too great, I cannot consider it’. The fact is that God did speak to him and he got this wonderful impression of God's greatness. That would encourage us. We might feel daunted when speaking about growing in the knowledge of God. Some of us may feel it is such a grand subject that we do not know where to begin, we hardly know how to proceed, but God answers such a thing with His own reward and blessing.

AEM One thing God also does here is to address the fact that we might be daunted, by making us suitable. I am thinking of “loose thy sandals from off thy feet”. Moses did not think of that at first. God just makes sure he is suitable for receiving such a message.

JL We have to do with a gracious God. How considerate God is of us. He loves to bless us. Blessing is divinely conferred happiness. God is set to bless us and the consequence of that is that we lift our hearts in blessing and praise towards God. That is what happened in regard of David.

RDP-r I would like to ask about “God called to him out of the **midst** of the thorn-bush”. I wondered whether perhaps we should recognise that where God speaks is from the midst of His people at the present time.

JL I am sure we should. It is imperative that we pay attention to

divine speaking. Such was the power that was anticipated in the prophetic word coming in at Corinth that Paul indicated that a stranger might come in and report "God is indeed amongst you", 1 Cor 14: 24, 25. That is what happened with Moses here. God was there, His voice was heard, but then he got an impression that God was there, the great "I AM". When time rolls on "I AM" remains the same; when time has ceased to be "I AM" subsists from eternity to eternity: God is God. What an impression He must have got of the majestic greatness of God.

RDP It says, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". That would have meant great things but He starts it by saying "I am the God of thy father". We do not even know much about the father of Moses but God ranks his relationship with the father of Moses, "a man of the house of Levi" (chap 2: 1), with such great men as Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. That is very affecting, is it not? The greatness of God extends not only to the headlines and the great figures but He includes the God of Moses's father in with them.

JL I am glad of your touch about the relationships involved here; God delights in that. "I AM THAT I AM" is really an expression of divine majesty without relation or connection with anything, but these other references you have quoted, "the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob", bring in the thought of relationship. I might just say for the interest of the young people; if you seek guidance as to where to begin in regard of studying the great things of God, there are three things that impressed me: love, life and relationship; they all flow into eternity. They all connect with the purpose of God for men and they spring from the knowledge of God Himself - love, life and relationship: God has great delight in relationship. He has expressed Himself in such a way. "Father", the very name by which we now know God, implies relationship.

DJW Does His reference to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob connect with what Moses already had some knowledge of? God does not suddenly give us a leap in the knowledge of Himself. He builds it up on what we already know.

JL That is helpful. That would be a feature of our enquiries together, that there should be progressive development among us in relation to the truth as we have an interest to look into things. I believe that is how it would take place. Undoubtedly in our personal

consideration of things too we should seek the help of the Holy Spirit that things may advance and progress in an orderly way, building upon what is already there in our hearts.

DJW I was thinking of the progression in the three references to Paul's conversion.

JL Yes, that helps.

HJG An experience like this is never to be forgotten; "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush", Deut 33: 16.

JL Do you think you would ever forget some impression of the great "I AM"?

HJG If I got an impression - even though it might be a small one - if my affections were really touched I would want more of it.

JL Moses's impression was because of the thorn-bush and what was taking place in regard of it. God passes us all through different experiences in our lives to bring us to the knowledge of Himself. God is very wise; He is "the only wise God", Rom 16: 27. He is very gracious; He leads us in paths that sometimes involve sore discipline and difficulties for us. Out of it the divine intention would be that there should be an emergence of a greater knowledge of Himself that clings to our hearts and abides into eternity. The knowledge of God formed in us is another thing that goes through to eternity.

JAT Is it right to say that God could have put this thorn-bush before Moses earlier? I was thinking of God's timing in relation to this.

JL Immediately prior to this he had been forty years in the desert. That is quite a long time. Forty years in the desert, God preparing his heart, in a way, to unlearn what he had learned in the previous forty years perhaps. It was to bring him to the point where he would grasp some wonderful knowledge of Himself in view of becoming serviceable and leading His people.

JAT In his latter writings, he can say, "Yea, he loveth the peoples", Deut 33: 3. That would be involved in the thorn-bush. Later on we have, "For I Jehovah change not, and ye, sons of Jacob, are not consumed", Mal 3: 6.

JL "Not consumed". He was to learn through this experience. Jehovah said, "I have seen assuredly the affliction of my people who

are in Egypt, and their cry have I heard on account of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver", Ex 3: 7, 8.

JAT Paul in Ephesians, when he is speaking of great things, seems to dwell on the fact that "He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens" (Eph 4: 10): He is not changed. We must appreciate the stoop of Jesus and the cross of Jesus and that would teach us much.

JL Before they were actually delivered there were the many plagues but there was the passover lamb, chap 12. What an experience to learn, "I am come down to deliver". It is a wonderful thing to learn the way God has come near in Christ.

GMcK I am thinking of the title "I AM THAT I AM". In Psalm 106, there were two things; "Amen!" and then "Hallelujah!". I was wondering if the Amen comes first: we submit to His greatness. We have to come into some knowledge of it and some submission to it. Moses was not only to learn that for himself but he was to take it to the people. They were all to come into submission in that way to the "I AM" first; and the "Hallelujah" will come.

JL Yes. The statement could clearly stand by itself at the end of Psalm 106: "Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel, from eternity and to eternity!" but my interest in reading that particular verse was because of the link with all the people being brought to say "Amen!", as if God would cause us just to pause and consider and think about His greatness and acknowledge it, and then as a consequence bring out the spirit of response in "Hallelujah!". God, in effect, would say, "I AM THAT I AM". It is a wonderful thing when we say,

"Thou art that God" to the age eternal,
Loved and adored by vast myriads of men! (Hymn 129)

That is the response of the saints to the God who is the great I AM. We would say, "Thou art that God" (2 Sam 7: 28); we would really in effect be saying, "Amen! Hallelujah!".

RDP Just to be practical, it took Moses a little while, a few pages of Scripture before you could say he said, 'Amen'. God had made Himself known to him in His greatness but Moses protests about his inadequacy and his weakness. He is brought to a point where he, at least typically, says 'Amen', and then later on you come to 'Hallelujah'. You come to the song at the end of Revelation and the song of the Lamb

is the answer, speaking of the absoluteness of God's committal. There is no uncertainty about it but it took Moses a little while to come to 'Amen' and 'Hallelujah'.

JL Time has not changed the Deity; neither has it changed the purposes of divine love. It has not caused them to be modified or altered and it had not changed God's thoughts for His people. If Moses did not altogether agree with the way God was wanting to act, or wanting him to act, then God was not going to change but He adjusts and helps and guides Moses; how patient God is with us all. He does not change His thoughts but He works with us in grace to bring us round to an understanding of them, and forms our hearts so that we should become vessels of service in His praise.

RDP Our lives are a testimony of the fact that God is bringing us all through to 'Amen' and 'Hallelujah' in relation to what God is doing. As with Moses, it sometimes takes a little while but He brings him into it.

JL It takes a little while. That makes the verse in Psalm 27 of interest to me because David says, "all the days of my life"; that is a remarkable statement of affection on the part of David. He did not say, 'I hope by the end of my life' but "all the days of my life". That is devotedness every day in life to seek to enquire as to these holy things. What a reward if we set ourselves to do that. I would like to make an appeal again to my younger brethren; it may be things are difficult and testing for them - or perhaps for any or all of us - but day by day every day of our lives let us seek after God and after a better understanding of His purpose. How rewarding that is and it is what was before David here.

RWF What do you say about the "One thing have I asked of Jehovah"?

JL Other scriptures would show that it was not the only thing he asked of Jehovah. It was a prime thing that was before his heart. For the moment he is indicating that it was just this one singular absorbing desire that was before his affections.

RWF I was linking it in my mind with what we have been saying about Amen. There is a suggestion that everything comes into focus. The experience of Moses was very extensive and varied and so it was of David. The Psalms are evidence of his experience with God but here as a result of all that he says, "One thing". I wondered if that might

encourage us to have a focus ourselves on what God would have us understand and reach a conclusion.

JL I am sure that is right. Undoubtedly this seemed to be something that was causing David's interest and affection to be focused at this point, in view of beholding, "the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire of him in his temple". He sought for other things but this was an absorbing desire at this particular point in his life. There are times in our experience when we are brought to see that certain things are of vital importance and they help us to become focused in our outlook.

RWF The apostle Paul says, "I pursue", Phil 3: 12. He had a great objective, "the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus", v 14.

AEM I was wondering if it links with what Solomon asked for, "an understanding heart", 1 Kings 3: 9. The note there says 'a heart that hears'. God was pleased with that seeking and He gave him much more besides. I wondered if that comes through here in David.

JL Yes, it does and fits in with my thought. I mentioned at the beginning that, running parallel with the desire to grow in the knowledge of God and in the understanding of the purposes of divine love, is the pleasure of God in those who seek to grow in these things. You get that impression here. David was not setting himself every day of his life to find help in regard of his needs. Beholding the beauty of Jehovah is not an answer to a felt need as creatures here. It was really an evidence of his affection and love for God.

AEM You emphasised in your introduction that today is one of the days. Can you help us practically as to how we might fulfil this a little more?

JL Well, we are enquiring in His temple. We are seeking to proceed with holy enquiry and I think these impressions that we have been enjoying of the great I AM are like apprehensions of the beauty of Jehovah and the glory that has come out into expression. The very thought of this must focus our minds on Christ Himself because He is the One who has declared God; the One who has revealed the Father's affection for us. It must focus our view on Christ.

JAT We might think about God in many aspects but the beauty of Jehovah is very wonderful. You spoke about Jesus. How would we know God, the beauty of Jehovah? Many have been the thoughts of men about God but we have the privilege of being engaged with the

beauty. I would like to know something of what it involved.

JL I cannot help but think that, in a special way for us, it has found its expression in Christ. The glory of God shines in the face of Jesus, 2 Cor 4: 6. What a beautiful contemplation for our hearts. God is possessed of majesty, might, dominion, power, many attributes; David dwells upon them in 1 Chronicles 29. We often draw on that in the service of God. Majestic features belong to God but the beauty of Jehovah, the outshining of the preciousness of God as He has come forth in love towards us, we really see in the face of Jesus Christ.

JAT There is what is beautiful in the saints, which is the reflection of God. That is not in any way lessening the uniqueness of the name of God. It is "I AM THAT I AM" - not 'that I was' or 'that I will be', but "I AM"; that is wonderful.

RDP-r Anna, "did not depart from the temple, serving night and day" (Luke 2: 37), and she "spoke of him", v 38. Is that the result of dwelling in the house of Jehovah? I was just thinking of the beautiful character of a widow woman who really filled out what David was seeking after, to "dwell in the house of Jehovah". The result of it was that she could speak of the beauty of Jehovah. Simeon comes up and speaks too: "mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2: 30), which was really the beauty of Jehovah coming out in that blessed Man. The note to beauty in Psalm 27 says, 'graciousness' which is God coming out in grace to man.

JL That is interesting. Anna spoke of Him to others; Simeon spoke to God.

RDP-r It says that she was "serving night and day with fastings and prayers; and she coming up the same hour gave praise to the Lord, and spoke of him to all those who waited for redemption in Jerusalem".

JL She spoke to all. If we have got some real apprehension of the beauty of Jehovah as expressed in Christ, we will have full hearts that can bring out something in expression for the encouragement of one another.

TM I was wondering if 1 Chronicles 29 would bring out David's knowledge of God and the beauty of Jehovah: "all the congregation, Bless now Jehovah your God", v 20.

JL I am sure that is right. One little section in 1 Chronicles 29

interests me in that regard. He says, "Thine, Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and **the splendour**, and the majesty", v 11. Psalm 111 says, "His work is majesty and splendour", v 3. That is of interest; splendour belongs to God Himself but His work reflects the splendour of Jehovah too. The work of God in His saints brings out the beauty of what is of God as expressed in His saints: Christ formed there. There is what is true of Christ personally. but then Christ formed in the saints brings out what is attractive and beautiful too.

TM It says, "In them is all my delight", Ps 16: 3.

JW Would what you say be confirmed in what Moses says in Psalm 90? "Let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us", v 17.

JL Yes, the excellence of God's work you were thinking of?

JW I was thinking of the beauty of Jehovah seen in Christ. The desire Moses had was that it should be upon us.

JL "Let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it". What are we really labouring at? Are we seeking on our part the desire that Christ should be formed in us? That was David's desire here to be occupied all the days of his life. That is a beautiful expression, "all the days of my life".

IMcK He goes on to say, "that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life". How would we know that we are in the right place, dwelling there?

JL I think it flows from experience with God. He speaks of the temple here. The temple was not actually built at that time. Solomon built the temple afterwards. He speaks about "the habitation of thy house" in the previous psalm, v 8. He loved the habitation of God's house. It was really the consciousness of being in the presence of God. The holiest for us is not a place. You would not go to a place to find the holiest. It is the presence of God known, the consciousness of being in the holy presence of God. We always have access to that through wondrous grace in this favoured dispensation.

JAT The first verse of Psalm 90 would convey that. It is God's presence.

JL It is God's presence known.

JAT "Lord, *thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations", Ps

90: 1. Then it says, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty”, Ps 91: 1.

JL I have no doubt from one point of view that the temple involves the saints gathered collectively in view of holy enquiry in the temple, but it is where the Spirit of God dwells. It is where God's presence is known and felt. That is how we are to apprehend the temple.

MJW I was thinking of Anna. It says that she “did not depart from the temple”. What a reward she had: she saw the Babe.

JL The great thing is to have affection to keep in that realm where the presence of God can be enjoyed and known.

DJW Is the temple not where God speaks, where all were before God to hear what he would say? I was thinking of the privilege of the days of our recovery. Not many Christians enjoy the character of readings that we have where enquiry has been made into the truth, and it is a wonderful thing that we experience that God speaks to us at those times.

JL Yes, I am sure that is right. We were just saying in the house that in that way it is not a debating society. We have not come here to debate this particular subject that has been before us. We have come together to enquire in a holy way in God's temple. The two things are completely different. The one might just be the wish to express my personal opinion about a particular subject, but the other is to come in such a spirit that we recognise God is there and we are waiting to hear what God would say by way of His Spirit.

AMcK Those two words in square brackets are so important “inquire [of him] in his temple”. It sets the level of our enquiry. It is making way for divine Persons to move and to work among us. We are not enquiring based on our own intelligence or our own knowledge but we are enquiring of divine Persons. What might their word be for us today? That would be enquiry in His temple.

JL Words in square brackets are inserted to help us to get the sense. It helps us to get the sense of what is in mind in the temple: we are enquiring of Him.

RDP The setting of the psalm is David in the midst of trouble. His concern about the day of evil and “evil-doers, mine adversaries and mine enemies”. “If a host encamp against me, my heart shall not fear”.

Then we have this lovely verse that you have read. I wonder if for us it is like the area where we enter by the Spirit: "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day", Rev 1: 10. He says, "For in the day of evil he will hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tent will he keep me concealed". There are other places that God has but His house is the place of His complacent rest. David is saying, 'In the midst of evil I will seek and dwell in the house of Jehovah'. That was his objective in the day of evil. That is what he had before him. He was not fighting the battles because he enjoyed the battles but he was in the midst of a day of evil. He knew what the pavilion was; he knew what the secret of his tent was. What he really looked for was dwelling in the house of Jehovah and enquiring.

JL I like that. That contributes to restfulness of spirit. We do not get the best when we are agitated. I remember a brother saying in a reading when I was quite young that cream does not settle in agitated milk; so if you want to get the best you have to settle down in restfulness of spirit among the saints. That is an important thing. If there are difficult times, and they do arise, what a wonderful thing to confide in God who would hide us in His pavilion, shelter us under His care. David in effect says, 'Just wait, be patient'. Look at the last verse of the psalm, "Wait for Jehovah; be strong and let thy heart take courage: yea, wait for Jehovah". If need be, hide in the pavilion until God moves and acts and speaks, and then we will know how we should move and act and speak.

RDP It is interesting that it speaks of Jehovah's house, Jehovah's pavilion and Jehovah's tent. I cannot explain what they are but they had obviously entered into David's experience and perhaps in a day like ours let us always keep the quietness and the blessedness of the full thoughts of God and wait.

JL I think all these expressions - the pavilion and the tent, and whatever we might say of the detail of the suggestions - they convey that the presence of God is to be known there; in His pavilion or His tent. It is remarkable that God should dwell in a tent. We have been thinking of God expressing Himself in a thorn-bush. Think of Him being prepared to dwell in a tent. What a wonderful God we have to do with. He is the God of the universe who is from eternity, and to eternity; yet comes so near in Christ, patient in His ways and activities with His people.

ADP At the beginning of Psalm 27 you get a sense that David had

measured the world around Him. He says, "Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?". Then it goes on to speak of the pavilion, the house, all of these things. It was settled there. You have spoken as to the knowledge of God and experience with God and it is a process, true experience. Here David has a measure of the world around him.

JL That is helpful. We should value the Psalms and read them often because they bring out the experience of others who knew what the presence of God was. How they grew in the knowledge of God in all that they went through! They become food for our souls and a comfort for our hearts.

PWB I think this enquiry is helpful and encouraging; I like what you have drawn attention to as to the day. It helps us: we have spoken about these things looking a bit daunting, but God is very gracious in the way that He splits things up for us. He does not expect us to go beyond a day. Psalm 90 has been referred to quite a bit; "teach us to number our days", v 12. This knowledge of God we can experience at the beginning of a day, a moment spent with God, or in the Scriptures. A moment at the end of the day to just seek to consolidate what God has taught me would help us; it is not so daunting then. Day by day, God will lead us if we allow Him to.

JL I will refer you to something you said some time ago; you said, 'God had not entered into an arrangement with a time share'. We have been taken up that we should be wholly possessed and that Christ would occupy our affections all day every day. That does not mean that we do not attend to other necessary things that have to be attended to in life but in our inward affections we must be preserved with Christ before us and make way for the service of the Holy Spirit. How blessed that we have such a One with us and in us. We can commune with the Holy Spirit at any time, night or day. Sometimes the young people will have seen an entry 'open 24/7' - twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. You might hardly feel free at times to speak to your parents during the night if they are asleep. You might be reluctant to rouse them, but you can address the Lord night and day at any time, any moment; wonderful access we have to One who so loves us. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. What liberty we have for communion.

DSB David's desire here every day was "to behold the beauty of Jehovah". Is that a good start for the day?

JL It is an extremely good start.

DSB To “behold the beauty of Jehovah”, comes before enquiring; if we see the greatness and glory of divine Persons that will colour our enquiry.

JL In language which we perhaps more often use amongst ourselves, we would say that we would seek to gain some impression of Christ at the beginning of each day. That is a very important thing and shows the value of maintaining household readings, just to seek to gain some impression of Christ - not only to get an answer to needs for the day. We do need to pray about that too, for help concerning all that may be needed in the day, but to begin the day with the desire to gain some impression of the beauty of Christ is a very precious thing.

I was just thinking of the importance of this section in 1 Corinthians where Paul says, “Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared for them that love him”; I feel quite searched by that little bit at the end. God has prepared them for those who love Him. He loves us, and that has been made manifest in that He has given His Son for us. The heart of God has been expressed towards us in Christ. Do we love Him? There are things that can be revealed in their wealth to those who love God; that should surely stimulate our desire to seek the help of the Spirit, the Searcher of the depths of God, that we should be enlarged in these things.

AEM We have spoken about the start of every day. One thing we know for certain is that the love of God has not changed since yesterday. Mine may have.

JL Ours may ebb and flow, but He remains the same, the great “I AM”.

JW We can only know those things by the Spirit, the things that God has prepared for us, those that love Him.

JL That is important because we might say we seek the help of the Holy Spirit to learn these things. But the fact is, there is no other way apart from the Spirit. We surely need His help for we have no other resource or means of entrance into the depths of God.

JW Mr Raven helps us to see we get things by the Spirit. We go to the Scriptures to see what we have got. The only way to get things substantially in Christianity is by the Spirit. We have the thing before we have the words.

JL Yes; I think that is right and we have to have respect for the arrangements that have been entered into by divine Persons in view of our help. I am thinking now of the gifts sent down by Christ, our risen Head. A young brother once said to me he did not think he was going to read much ministry, he would rather read the Scriptures and then he would know that what he enjoyed he had got for himself. I said to him, 'Can I rephrase that for you? Is that not like saying to the Lord, "Thank you very much for the gifts sent down but I will manage without them"?'. We cannot do that. We need to value what has been made available to us through the wisdom of the Lord Jesus, and the gifts given, and the presence of the Spirit here to help us to enter into these things.

JW I think so; it would be a great loss to us if we did not avail ourselves of what has come to us through the gifts.

JL I think we have to say that the depths have really been searched out through the Spirit's help, and in temple enquiry much wealth has been brought out over the years. It is part of the way we enter intelligently and affectionately into the things of God.

DJW Is our exercise to be teachable? The reference here is to things taught by the Spirit.

JL That is a good point. It is important to be amenable to the Spirit's help: He is available to us and clearly we would say with the greatest reverence He is competent to fill out the service because of who He is. He has infinite knowledge but we need to be amenable to get the gain of that help.

RJF What does it mean here, to love God, please?

JL We said much earlier that we are not likely to make much progress in divine things without affection, and I think loving God is the evidence of that. The heart formed and brought to the point where I not only have found an answer to my need but I come to love God, whose heart has been so expressed towards me. As I love God it would seem that God would take up with interest that affection in my heart and as was quoted earlier "he is a rewarder of them who seek him out". Seek Him out in affection and with love for Himself. May be there is more in it than that.

RJF It is a challenge but at the same time it is not a bar or obstacle to think that I do not love God enough. If you love someone you listen to what they say. If we love God we would listen to what the Holy Spirit has

to say and that gives an entrance into great things.

JL Love knows no bounds. If there is love in my heart for God, there is vast room for expansion. You cannot put a boundary on the love of God. It is infinite.

TM At the end of the chapter it is “we have the mind of Christ”, v 16. Could you say something as to that intelligent faculty? Would you think the mind of Christ would help us in our knowledge of God?

JL I am sure that is right and it would involve in a particular way the answer arrived at collectively. That wonderful vessel the assembly having the mind of Christ is intelligently brought into the understanding of His mind who is the Head.

Witney

12th October 2013

Key to initials:-

D S Bodman, Dorking; A M Brown, Grangemouth; P W Burton, Taunton; R J Flowerdew, Sunbury; R W Flowerdew, Sunbury; H J Glass, Malvern; J Laurie, Brechin; A J McKay, Witney; G McKay, Manchester; I McKay, Witney; T Mair, Cullen; A E Mutton, Witney; R D Painter, Yeovil; A D Plant, Birmingham; R D Plant, Birmingham; J A Turner, Malvern; M J Welch, Newport; D J Willetts, Birmingham; J Wright, Witney

WHAT DO WE BEHOLD?

Robert Gray

Genesis 28:16-19

Exodus 16: 14-15

John 17: 3

I was encouraged by both the hymn and the prayer to read these scriptures. They have been in my mind already but the hymn began,

O Lord, Thy glory we behold, (Hymn 81)

and the question that has been in my mind for some time is, 'What do we behold?' The hymn is clear that it is, 'not with mortal eyes'. It must therefore be a question of the Holy Spirit's work, but I challenged myself: what do we expect when we come to the meeting? We may say that this is the meeting for ministry, and we expect to hear a word from one and another but the question is: how substantial are these things to us? Do we come because we are obliged to do so? What do we grasp, what do we go away from the meeting with that we did not have when we came? I take this to myself.

I read about Jacob because he evidently had an experience that affected him. It caused deep exercise in his mind. It says, "he was afraid and said how dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God". You say, that is not a good way to begin but I think it was quite a good way to begin. He had come to do with a divine Person. I do not think he was fully aware of it: perhaps he would have some understanding of what had gone on. He said, "How dreadful is this place". Now, you ask, 'You would not say that about coming to the meeting, would you?'. And, of course, we would not say that, but I would say this, that the things we have to do with are of God, and I cannot come and go as I like. The Lord spoke of a mustard tree that grew and grew, and He says, "the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches", Matt 13: 32. 'I will come if I like and I will stay away if I like'; that is not what we should have in our minds and hearts. It is not dreadful in the sense of inspiring fear but God's things must not be trifled with: they belong to God after all. In one sense we set this meeting on, the brethren arranged it, which is right, but there is another sense in which God called it, and when He called it He had something in mind. God never does anything pointless or casual. When He does

something He has an end in view and reaches it, so that we would go away from this meeting, I trust, with something. I do not want to lay burdens on the hearts of the brethren, especially our younger brethren, but we should have something that we have gleaned and seek grace to lay hold of it and retain it. So Jacob did that. He “rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had made his pillow, and set it up for a pillar”. That is a change, is it not? I do not suppose it was a very good pillow, but that is all he had, and he made something out of it that had God in view. Maybe that was the first time in his life that he had really thought of God, arranged something that was to be pleasing to God. It says he “set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el”. He gave it a definite name. That was a definite and substantial point in his experience which I think he kind of forgot about for a while, but God reminded him, and so it may be with our experiences. God gives us a touch: it is in our hearts and we are impressed, then the cares of life press in and things overlay it a bit, but God has not forgotten and He brings us back to the touches that He gives us.

Now in Exodus we read about the manna. We know the manna was to be collected for the household. However, all I had in mind in this was the expression “What is it?”. Now, I genuinely feel that we should have that experience in our household exercises and that we should be impressionable when we come together. Is there something in our gatherings that would cause us to say something like this - ‘what is happening?’. You see, we cannot be literal; the hymn made that clear and our brother in his prayer emphasised what was said,

‘Tis not for human eye to see ...

We are not expecting a miracle, and it is not the case that unless we have a lot of singing and activity we are not really achieving very much. That is not the point at all: we come to gain something and God provides it. God put the manna in front of them and - I speak with the utmost reverence - He waited to see what reaction He would get. They called it something; they called it manna, “What is it?”. Now we come on to the realm of things where exercise is called for. They picked it up; it must have been readily accessible and I think somebody somewhere has said in ministry that if you looked around every bush, every tree, every bit of ground would all be covered with manna. Now that is how careful God is that He should provide us with what we need every day, and this is one of the things that bears on us, that what God is doing, He is doing

for us every day. I have been impressed also recently with how much detail God is prepared to go into with each one of us. Little things, you might almost say trivial things, would come into our lives but we are led to a word of prayer and the answer comes. Am I surprised? Well, I ought not to be: it is not that I can command God and seek miracles at His hand but I can ask for His help in a dependent way, and look for an answer, and answer He will. So this matter then required continual exercise: it takes us a step further. It required obedience: they were given instructions about this which they either ignored to begin with, or did not properly pay attention to. They kept the manna overnight, and it stank. I am going back now to "How dreadful is this place!". We cannot treat God's matters as optional. If He tells us to do something He expects us to do it and the glory of the matter is it will help us if we do.

In John 17 we come to a much more elevated line of things and this is part of the glory of Christianity. You see, we have come to recognise God, we know the Lord Jesus as Saviour, and have the gift of the Holy Spirit. We can take in what the Lord would say to us and appropriate it. The hymn gave us a very good outline of it:

'Tis not for human eye to see,
Nor human ear to hear ...

But God, in love, has freely giv'n
His Spirit, who reveals ...

So we find out through exercise what kind of God we have to deal with. He "giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not", Jas 1: 5 (KJV). We are reminded constantly that God has not withheld anything by way of blessing. Is there something that He could have given us and has not? You know there is nothing, but what He has poured it out. He gave the Lord Jesus first of all, His own Son, and God was affronted by the way He was treated and insulted, and what did He do? He poured out His Spirit. Is there any God like that? Is there any one we can have to do with who is like God? There is none, and so I say to myself, 'Give thanks, but be careful; let me not trifle with these things'. God has been very, very merciful. I can understand something of Jacob's thoughts, looking back over his whole history. What about all the clever things he did? He says nothing of that: "the God that shepherded me all my life long", Gen 48: 15. The hymn says too:

In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found

Patient, gracious, powerful, holy ...

(Hymn 76)

That is the God we deal with, that is the God who supplies us, that is the God who sets things in front of us for our blessing and good, but I say again: He is not to be trifled with. I do not want to instil fear or dread in anybody's mind but He is God and let us pay attention to what He says and what He lays on us.

John 17 is a wonderful chapter where we have the Lord speaking to His Father. He is not speaking to the disciples directly: He is speaking about them. He is speaking to His Father. You know, this is how we are led on and taught. Another thing about Christianity is that we are taught what God has in mind for us. It says in Isaiah about the ploughman, "His God doth instruct him", chap 28: 26. Well, God does instruct us; I hope He is instructing us now. I do trust that God is saying something, and I would add to that, I do trust that we are expecting to hear something from God here, now, at this time. We cannot command God, but we can come in faith and with the Spirit active in our hearts. Do you think God would say nothing? Of course He will say something that is valuable and worth hearing, but I just touch on this. The Lord is speaking to His Father. Again it comes to us as instruction, "this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". We come to the place and the point where we begin to be initiated into divine secrets. God is still instructing us, and what is He telling us? He is telling us, I say with reverence, how He conducts His own affairs. Is that not marvellous grace? "And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent". We begin to learn divine secrets. Now all these things are real. You say, 'I cannot see it, I have no proof'; no, but what you do have is the Spirit. Do we all have the Holy Spirit? It certainly is God's will for us that every one of us should have the Holy Spirit. We all have His Spirit and another thing, we all have faith. If we come with faith and the Spirit, God is able to make these great and glorious things real to us, as real as if we could see them physically with our eyes. In fact, they are more real because they are eternal. Well, I trust the Lord will use this word.

Grangemouth

23rd July 2013

THE BORDERS OF THE LAND

Norman T Meek

Numbers 34: 1-12

Mark 7: 24-32

I would like to say something, dear brethren, as to the borders of the land, the land of Canaan. You might ask me what it represents and I suppose it is typical in some way of the believer's present position. The believer is not to be settled just anywhere; he is to be settled in the land of God's choosing. We do have ground for thinking of it in a future sense - no doubt J N Darby had that in mind when he wrote

When to Canaan's long-loved dwelling,
Love divine thy foot shall bring (Hymn 76).

We are allowed a certain flexibility in applying these Old Testament types, but it is not strictly speaking typical of heaven, because when the people got there, there were giants and you will not find those in heaven. It is typical more of the believer's divinely appointed position where a good deal can be enjoyed; but it is not exactly the settled state of heaven.

There will be war in heaven, and even now there is a conflict in heaven (Rev 12: 7-12); I am referring to the fact that the accuser is there but also the Advocate. There is conflict in that sense. There is One, the blessed Lord Jesus, who has taken up the Christian's case even though he fails; the Lord is having to meet Satan's efforts to discredit me (alas that I should give him any handle), but still the Lord is there, 1 John 2: 1, 2. I mention these things because, strictly speaking, Canaan is more typical of the believer's present position and calling, a place where God would have you and me to be. He led His people out of Egypt and, of course, for us the wilderness journey goes on as well. (You cannot tailor the types to fit exactly into Christianity, although there are some very blessed lessons to be learned.) For us the wilderness experience goes on along with that of the land. Going to work is a wilderness experience, I suppose doing the washing is a wilderness experience; but coming to the meeting is more of a land experience. But God directed them to Canaan; that was the place to be. It was not back into Egypt; it was not to Moab or to Edom or Greece, but it was to Canaan, and therefore it must represent in some way the believer's position in responsibility here.

Now questions come up as to how I stand in relation to unbelievers, how I stand in relation to God's service, and it is interesting that, in Numbers 34, the borders are quite clearly defined. It is as if God in His grace would give us a wide area in which to move and live and praise Him, and yet there are borders to it; the land is defined. So that the question comes up constantly in one's life as to whether I am justified in doing this or that. I must keep within the borders - that is God's appointed place for me - to keep within the borders; but not to be narrow or cramped. If you look at the map (and many of us have maps in the back of our Bibles) you will see that the land was quite long and narrow. That strip of land on the eastern side of the Mediterranean, the land of Canaan, has two long borders, one on the east and one on the west, but comparatively short borders on the north and south. One thing that I would suggest to the brethren is this, that, in the delineation of the borders of the land, so much water is used to define it. On the west side there was the Mediterranean Sea: verse 6 virtually gives us the complete border: "the great sea, and its coast". Now, other seas came into the border as well and also extensively on the eastern side, the River Jordan. You might say, 'We do not want a geography lesson', and that is true, but there must be some reason for this instruction and I think involved in it there may be God's consideration for our need of constant preservation. You could not go very far east or west without coming to water, and there you would not be unaware of the border. It would not be like walking across a field or several fields; if you came to water you would be made immediately aware and when you came to water you would say, 'This is the limit'. I think that is partly God's consideration for us, dear brethren, that there are certain clear demarcations suggested and they are marked by water. Now, it is not entirely like that because on the north and south there were adjacent lands and it would have been easy, in those directions, to have gone over the border. However, if you look carefully at the physical map (and I am sure that we understand these things are types for us), there is teaching to be found in it for us. But these two other, north and south, probably test our powers of discernment as to what is suitable and where the border lies. So that, speaking quite simply, dear brethren, questions come up as to how far, for example, I may go with relatives not in fellowship. Clearly to ignore their existence altogether is not of God as the family idea is of God and I have a responsibility to my brother or sister, even if they are not in fellowship. But we are tested, and I think God left this north and south border especially to test us. He

has defined a good deal for us but there are areas which have purposefully been left undefined; unlike in the definite way that the meeting of water would suggest. Therein we are tested as to our judgment and to know what we should do. I trust the brethren would agree with this; I think it is right. The interesting thing about the two long borders, in the teaching of it, is that the west border is the sea which speaks, of course, of the gospel. It is there you get the 'fish' who are going to be brought into the assembly and it is a very large border, as if to suggest that there is plenty of room for gospel activity and an evangelical outlook. You can walk to the coast and there is plenty to do, dear brethren, evangelically. I wish that I was more able, more adept, perhaps I should say (not to excuse myself) more committed to it.

Now the great apostle Paul, he looked at what this sea represents and he fished it too (Rom 15: 16-21), securing the material for the assembly. Solomon brought material this way for the temple. It came down the sea on the rafts, cut down and floated down by raft for the building of the temple. It is like a person today cut down, made useless for the world, but made useful in relation to God's house and praise, 1 Kings 5: 8-11. So that there is the suggestion that on the west side there is plenty of room for gospel activity, but this, of course, brings its own questions as well. Mr. Coates has a letter (Letters p 22) in which he speaks of how he would go a long way in his sympathies with a person who was an evangelist and who loved souls and desired to win them; and yet he could not embrace all that popular evangelism does. You see, an intelligent believer could not go on the radio and preach the gospel, could he? How could he use unclean means to speak about the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus? But still, there is a great area open and I trust that we will not neglect it, maybe in our contact with those we work with. I know that some are constantly at this; thank God for every one such who never fails to take the opportunity to speak to persons about their souls: they operate on the west border and are justified in doing so. May we be encouraged, all of us in our places, because there is many a needy soul, many a divorced person, many a heartbroken person, who does not know where to turn - not even in relation to their circumstances in life - to whom a word about "the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared" (Titus 2:11) would just be balm, Jer 8: 22. Let us not neglect it.

But as I said, this does bring its test and there is on the other side, on the eastern side of the land, the Jordan. That too is a long

boundary line and it speaks to us of the death of Jesus and also of our death with Him. The brethren will pardon me for going over this: we used to be taught that the Red Sea suggested the Lord's death for us, how He has come in, how He has delivered us from the power of Satan - represented in Pharaoh - made a way through and broken Satan's power; He did that by His death. He could go through, but the Egyptians could not; they could not face that. He could face it and He made a way through for His people, Exod 14: 15-31. But the Jordan is more my death with Him, that is, if He has died, if He was rejected by the world (the Jordan represents more that side), I will accept rejection too, my death with Him, Col 3: 1-4. So that enters in to the believer's present position. He is to be evangelical, he is to look on souls as he sees them and think of them potentially as persons for God's service and God's house, but he is also under this check that he has to say to the death of Jesus and all that that involves. It means, dear friends, that certain things are outside of a believer's touch, he regards them as incompatible with the death of Jesus.

Now I read in Mark because I thought it showed how the Lord respected these borders when He was here. I think I am right in saying that the Lord moved only within the confines of the land. The whole world was His and He is yet going to have it, "the nations for an inheritance, and for thy possession the ends of the earth" (Ps 2: 8), but the Lord when He was here accepted the limitations of that land. That is to be a great lever in my soul. Which of us has not wanted the world at some time as we have grown up? We have seen it in its glitter, what it offers, how fair it looks, how attractive, how bright, how appealing it looks. Older persons of course, even worldly persons who are older, become disillusioned with it sooner or later, but dear friend, as the hymn says -

O worldly pomp and glory,
Your charms are spread in vain!
I've heard a sweeter story,
I've found a truer gain

(translated from a German hymn written by Samuel C G Küster).

That is the answer. The Lord Jesus Christ and His world have much more to offer than this poor world. The Lord accepted the limitations, and limitations do come upon a believer, especially as he recognises that there is a certain place allotted for him. Now the Lord

moved here, as far as the border of Tyre and Sidon. He had gone right over to the west and there He found this soul. It is a very touching scripture, how the Lord went to the borders - the word is actually used in Mark 7: 24: "he rose up and went away thence into the borders of Tyre and Sidon". Previously to this, He is attacked by the Pharisees and scribes coming from Jerusalem, where they question Him and dispute with Him; and the Lord goes over to this area as if He would look for some soul: the greatest Preacher was the Lord Himself. He went as far as these borders and there He found a soul. How wonderful it was, what it must have meant to His heart! The great work that was going to be done in what that area represented was left for Paul, but the Lord as Man here accepted the limitations of His pathway, dear friend, and that is the happiest thing for you and me, to accept the divinely appointed limitations.

May we have grace to accept them. I know how we chafe, I know how I have chafed. I do not know what else to say except that the Lord is greater and He is more worthy; and it is more blessed to be with Him in a condition of limitation than to be without Him in a condition where I could do what I liked. It is more blessed to have the Lord.

I read in the next section how He came back. He went across to Decapolis and came to the sea, that is on the other side. I use this scripture in Mark, solely to point out that the Lord accepted those limitations. He said prophetically, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage", Ps 16: 6.

Well, I would suggest, dear brethren, that in the working out of our lives and our contacts with other believers, our contacts with men in the world, we have to respect these borders. The one is like having our heart wide, expansive, that is the west border, the great sea - the greatest sea that was in that area and to Israel it was the great sea. Compared to the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea it was a great sea. We have to respect that side, a great area, and our outlook is to be large: may it not become narrow. How easily, even as believers, we can become narrowed up in our affections; let our outlook be wide, looking out on persons, wherever they may be and what they might be potentially if they are recovered; then on the other side there is the fact that I must accept that the death of Jesus and my death with Him has brought me into certain limitations. So I cannot go everywhere - even if my heart towards other believers would go a long way with them there may come a time when my feet have to stop, to keep my feet in the

narrow path, but there are also these other areas, dear brethren, on which we are tested. The north and the south borders, where we are tested, where we do not, so to speak, meet water, are not extensive but it is there our spirituality and our judgment are tested and I suppose the answer in these situations is to seek the Lord's help and to be able to justify what we do.

Well, these thoughts are very fragmentary and I just commit the idea to the brethren, for their consideration.

May the Lord bless it to us, for His Name's sake.

1982

NOTE

There is a line missing at the top of page 3 of the February issue (No 83): the sentence beginning at the foot of page 2 should read:

They may depart from it, and they may touch much sorrow, but the Lord Jesus and the Father will remember for you the simple confessions you have made, and the simple trust and the prayers you have made to Jesus and to the Father.