

A
WORD
IN ITS
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Contents

THE EFFECT OF THE PREACHING

THE APPOINTED PLACE

THE CHILDREN'S KING

THE EFFECT OF THE PREACHING

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Acts 10: 34-45

Peter's preaching was very short. I suppose it only takes a couple of minutes to read it, but there was a marvellous effect. The intent in the preaching of the word of God is that there should be a marvellous effect in us. It is not just for persons who do not know God, or do not know Christ, but the preaching of the word of God is for you and me. If it is God's word it is for each one of us, and that is what was announced this morning, the preaching of the word of God; in faith we trust that that is what it will be. In it there will very likely be a word for me, and a word for you too. We constantly need the word of God, for our stimulation, adjustment, correction, whatever it might be. The word of God, as it says in Hebrews is "sharper than any two-edged sword", chap 4: 12. It is a very interesting way that the writer brings that in, and it has the power and keenness to divide. That is what it does in our hearts. It is not intended that we hear it and remain the same, but there is to be something going on inwardly with us that will have its outward expression and will show that the word is having its effect upon us, that God is having His way, because it is important that we should understand that God is going to have His way.

We often speak about the judgment-seat of Christ, but did you ever think of the judgment-seat of God? Do you know that at the judgment-seat of God you and I are going to give an account of ourselves? Now that is a very interesting but very sobering thing to consider. That is what the word of God tells us, that we are going to have to give an account to God (see Rom 14: 10, 12). Now if you and I were taken tonight, how would it be with us when we are placed before the judgment-seat of God? We are each, he says, going to give an account of ourselves. So think about that, think about it very soberly, that we are going to answer to God as to our lives. Therefore you can see the necessity of the word of God. The

judgment-seat of Christ is going to be an opening up of things so that we get a backward look to understand and get the divine assessment of every matter, every deed done in the body, both good and evil. You might say in a sense that the Lord is going to do a lot of explaining to us. Maybe this will be very rapid but the Lord will make abundantly clear to us the divine assessment of every matter.

But then there is the judgment-seat of God, and I would like each one of us to think about that because it affects our lives. It might affect us if we stop and consider the fact that we are going to give an answer to God as to our histories. I commend that to your consideration.

Peter comes in here and preaches a very remarkable gospel. This is the gospel to the gentiles. Earlier in the chapter there is this man Cornelius, a remarkable man in whom God worked. I believe we are here today because God has worked in our hearts and souls. We are of interest to heaven. It is a wonderful thing to consider the fact that you are of interest to the eye of heaven. A lot of persons are moving around this city today who have rejected the gospel. I do not think that we are in the presence of any who have rejected the gospel. Here the time had come when God is going to open up things to the gentile - that is you and me. You and I had claim to nothing. The Jews came in through, you might say, a peculiar line. God took them up; Paul says in his epistle to the Romans that theirs was the line of the blessing, and yet they lost it because of unbelief. They refused the word, they refused the Person and they refused His witness. The Lord witnessed a fine witness, excellent witness, and yet they rejected it. They rejected His Person: "He came to his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God", John 1: 11,12. That is where we come in. We are here today as the children of God through God's goodness, through His grace. We are not amongst those who have pushed the word away from us, and yet there might be with us the element of unbelief. Is there any element as to the truth in the Scriptures that you and I might be rejecting? Is there any element in our lives where we are on an independent line and doing

according to our own will? The world has many persons in it who are doing their own will and think they are doing what is right. In the time of the Judges men did what was right in their own eyes, not what was wrong. Just let us look at our lives. We can do this privately. It is a wonderful thing about the grace of God, He can appeal to us privately; even as we sit on our chairs we can have to do with God about our lives, about our private lives, when we cannot be seen by the brethren. If you look at your heart, sometimes you are much more concerned about what the brethren see than what God sees.

God sees every thing. There is no vestige of my life or your life which is hidden from the all-varied gaze of God. "All things", it says, "are naked and laid bare to his eyes, with whom we have to do", Heb 4: 13. And it is good just to let that get into us, because that comes into the same section which speaks about the word of God and its effectiveness. You are under the open gaze of God who sees everything you are going into, everything you are having to do with.

Oh, what a test these private lives of each one of us are! Beloved brethren, what we are in secret is really the test. Sometimes we put on an outward show but what God is looking at is our hearts, and He wants us to be right inwardly.

So the word of God comes to us; He says, I want you to look at your life, I want you to analyse your life in relation to the word of God and see where it is you stand with God. Are we taking on the features of the world? Are we allowing worldly features and characteristics to come in? Do I use the language of worldly men as I have to do with business? Do I fit into the pattern of man's righteousness, or in the area of business do I maintain God's righteousness? God knows exactly what we are going on with, exactly what we are doing, and we are all going to answer to God.

You might like to change that. Men say, I do not believe this, I do not believe that, and so forth. Beloved, that does not change anything one iota. If God says it is going to be, it is going to be; whether you believe it or not it is still going to be anyway. God appeals to us today that we might believe, and that we might be affected by the word.

In this short preaching that Peter presented to these persons there was a tremendous effect. One of the first things he refers to is the fact that peace was preached. He says "The word which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ... ye know".

"Preaching peace": I wonder if we all have peace. I am thinking first of the necessity of having peace as to your sins, peace as to the eternal destiny of your soul; this is vitally important, that you know that you have had to do with Him about your sins. We had a reference this morning that God has borne us on eagles' wings and brought us to Himself (see Exod 19: 4). How has He done this? He has done it through Christ. He did it through the burnt-offering, through the roast lamb, through the Red Sea; He brought persons to Himself. How is He doing it in our own time? He is doing it through the death of Jesus. It is "peace by Jesus Christ". Have we peace in our souls about our sins? The sin question has been met by Christ.

The detail of our sins is met through the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sin never gets into the presence of God. You might say to yourself, I can go through the week and go where I want to go and then come to the Supper and straighten up. If you have sin on you, you will not get into the presence of God. But the offering is there to meet it. "Let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup", 1 Cor 11: 28. You come via the offering and the laver; that is how we approach. So the offering is there meeting every judicial issue in our lives. It speaks in Hebrews about the weights and the sins that so easily entangle us {see chap 12: 1}.

They do easily entangle us. It is not difficult to pick up sins and to pick up weights; and what does it do? It shows on our lives, on our spiritual lives. We want to see to it that we come up to the Supper and approach God according to the way He has designed, that is through Christ and by the Spirit.

So Paul speaks here about peace. Have we peace? You say, I have known the Lord since I was young. You might have peace as far as your sins are concerned, but I would like to ask you if you have peace, that inward sense of peace, in your own relations with God. Are you fully reconciled to God in every area of your life? Have

we peace? "Preaching peace by Jesus". It is all there, it is all in a Man; He has removed every encumbrance. Every liability against us Christ has removed in His death, but are you and I in the good of this? or are we going on in secret sins? or are we going on in a pathway of self-will? It might be that I am doing my own will and this is very easy to do, because Paul speaks about doing our own will in humility (see Col 2: 18). We who are older can also do our own wills in humility. These things weights are written for us in the word of God because they are what entangle us; we carry these weights in our lives, and this hinders us in what is spiritual. So are you free and clear in every department of your life? Can the Lord come into every department in your life and look at it and be satisfied? Could He come into your house? Could He go from room to room, like the prophet who walked up and down in the house (see 2 Kings 4: 35)? Could He go through our houses and look into all the corners? Would He be satisfied with all my possessions, the things that I own? Or are there things that would embarrass you, things that might make you ashamed? The Spirit of God speaks of "things of which ye are *now* ashamed", Rom 6: 21. Therefore the word of God would search us out and make us look into every facet of our lives and see if they are in keeping with the will of God.

Most of us here took the Supper this morning, and that loaf spoke to us about a Man of whom it says, in Hebrews 10: 7, "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will", and in verse 5 of that chapter it says "thou hast prepared me a body". Think of Christ coming into a body! and in that body in which He lived for over thirty-three years never once was there any moment when everything was not in perfect peace and harmony with the mind of God. Well, how many years have we lived? and is this what characterises our lives, beloved brethren? that there is nothing hidden, there are no departments that are closed up, marked 'super secret'? But God is able to help us to look at these things and get peace, because if there is an area where He will not be satisfied or you would be ashamed, you are not in peace about that, there is

something working away at you. That is the way the word of God works, it kind of gets at you and you are really not at peace.

Peter goes on to speak of "Jesus who was of Nazareth: how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went through all quarters doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil, because God was with him". Think of them bringing thousands to Christ! They brought to Him persons who were maimed, who were affected by paralysis, persons who had every kind of disease and weakness that you can imagine, but the power of God was there, the anointing was there to meet the condition, and God brought in healing through Christ. It is just the same today.

Today it is a moral line of things that the Lord is meeting. Peter goes on to say, we are his witnesses, and speaks about Him being hanged, how they hanged Him on a cross, and how He was raised the third day and given to be seen openly, "not of all the people, but of witnesses who were chosen before of God, us who have eaten and drunk with him after he arose from among the dead". The resurrection is a marvellous thing, and if we have died and been buried with Christ and been raised with Him, we can be here in the power of His life. What comes out is of Christ; it is not of the flesh, though we know that we are in these conditions and the flesh wars against us. God intends us to be delivered from the power of the flesh. Paul says "I know that... in my flesh, good does not dwell", Rom 7: 18. Have you arrived at that? that in your flesh good does not dwell? Pride is so native to us, it is native to human nature.

Think of the one who in his pride will lift himself up as God (see 2 Thess 2: 4)! The appeal to the woman in the garden was really on the principle of pride; the serpent said "ye will be as God", Gen 3: 5.

The principle of pride is working in us, beloved brethren, maybe more than we want to admit. But it is a line of things that Christ is able to meet, and here it speaks of Him, that He was raised from amongst the dead. We want to get over to the Man that is raised from amongst the dead. Paul says "If therefore ye have been *raised* with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God", Col 3: 1. Now that is an appeal to

us. He says in the previous chapter (v.20), "If ye have died with Christ". Now he says, "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above". Now, let us be honest with ourselves before God. We do not have to tell the person next to us, just be honest with yourself before God as to how much this really marks us. How many hours in the past week have I devoted to what is of Christ and the assembly? Stack that over against how many hours you devoted to business and to your own things, and arrive at a judgment in the presence of God as to whether we are really seeking the things that are above, having our minds on the things that are above, "not on the things that are on the earth; for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God". We were speaking in the reading of the experience of things. What is our experience? We sit down and listen to the gospel, to the word of God, we sit under the finest of ministry, and yet we have to come back to it, How real are these things in our lives? He says "have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth; for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God".

The risen man is Christ out of death; this is what He has accomplished and what is open to us as appropriating it. You know, the mark of a risen man is not too attractive to the world. Look at John's gospel, chapter 12, and there you find a risen man, a man that had come out of death through the power of Jesus, and they did not want him. They tried to figure out a way whereby they could get rid of him. Resurrection is a line of things that is over against the flesh, and the resurrection of Jesus is something we want to get hold of. If you have died with Him and been raised with Him, seek the things that are above, the things which are morally elevated, not earthly-mindedness. Oh beloved brethren, earthly-mindedness gets a hold of us; what a grip it gets! In the glad tidings God would shake us loose from this and help us to get our minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are of the earth.

As Peter continues to speak it says "While Peter was yet speaking these words the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were hearing the word". Now, that is fine: "all those who were hearing the word". It does not say that the Holy Spirit fell on everyone that was present, but it does say that "the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were hearing the word". As we said yesterday, Mr Raven made the observation that one of the prime points in the preaching of the word of God is that persons might be given the gift of the Spirit. I would like to ask, Have you received the Spirit of God? If somebody came to you after the meeting and said to you, Have you received the gift of the Spirit since ye believed?, what would your answer be? You must be very sure that you have been given God's unspeakable free gift. This is one of the prime thoughts in the mind of God for us. He brings in the touch of new birth, then He gives us the gift of faith so that we can receive the word; you would never believe if you did not have the gift of faith. Where did the gift of faith come from? It came from God. It is not in me, it is not in you, but He gives you the gift of faith; you are exposed to the word and you receive it, all in view of coming into the mind of God, and the gift of the Spirit is prime in the mind of God, and I believe that the sequence of this chapter shows this. So the gospel is preached, it is very pungent, it is short, but then what happens? While Peter was yet speaking the Spirit of God fell on these persons. It was what the Spirit did Himself; in a sense it was an independent act of the Spirit. The Spirit of God was there and He is moving, and while Peter was yet speaking the Spirit of God fell on these persons. The gift of the Spirit becomes power in the believer to be here according to the mind of God. There are the fruits of the Spirit also, and these things are to be experienced, they are to be a reality with us. The fruit of the Spirit is detailed in Galatians 5 (see v 22), showing the intent of being indwelt by the Spirit of God. We are capacitated in grace to be here according to the will of God. It is a challenge to me as to whether I am here in this way. I do not know whether it is a challenge to you. Maybe if you think carefully about it, it will be. It is a great challenge I believe as to whether tomorrow morning we can go out into the sphere of testimony and rightly represent God, rightly represent the Man at the

right hand of God. John's gospel has been written that we might rightly represent God. Now, the secret to that, beloved brethren, lies in the gift of the Spirit, and our appropriation of the power that is in Him, because you cannot do it according to the flesh. You know how the flesh breaks down all the time. I know that, and I am sure you do too. The secret is that the believer is set up in power by the gift of the Spirit so that he can be here as a true representation of Jesus, and that is Christianity. "The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch", Acts 11: 26. Why? Because they brought into evidence in their testimony the Spirit of Christ. Now let us, this week, with the help of the Spirit, and with the desire that God would put into our souls, move here under the eye of God as those who are truly like Christ. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

TORONTO

23 April 1978

THE APPOINTED PLACE

Genesis 22: 1,2,14; 1 Chronicles 21: 28-30; 22: 1; Matthew 28: 16-20

P.v.d.B. I thought we might consider together the ground which God has appointed. The chapter we have read in Genesis speaks of "one of the mountains which I will tell thee of". It was not to be any mountain; Abraham had to wait on God as to which mountain it was to be. In Chronicles we have the way that David arrived at the place which was to be the foundation of the house of God. David arrived at it in a very deep way. In Matthew we have "the mountain which Jesus had appointed them". I think we need to see currently how God will provide; He will provide for us if we follow His directions and keep to the divine appointment - as it says in Genesis 22, "at the present day, on the mount of Jehovah will be provided" (v 14).

G.T.McC. One of the greatest provisions that has been given to us is the Lord's instruction, "this do in remembrance of me", Luke 22: 19.

Would it be connected with what is said that "On the mount of Jehovah will be provided"?

P.v.d.B. I think that is very important because the Lord's supper is not anywhere. It is not connected with a 'believers' meeting', for instance. It is connected with the assembly; it is divine territory. We get the burnt-offering referred to here, what God in His counsels has planned as to the basis on which He was going to be served. "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain", (Exod 3: 12) ; that is the mount of Jehovah and it is divine territory.

H.J.G. We had in the preaching on Lord's day that He was "given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God", Acts 2: 23. That enters into our acceptance of the gospel, does it not?

P.v.d.B. Yes, it does. It says, "as of a lamb... foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world", 1 Pet 1: 19,20. It entered into divine counsel, and the Spirit of God brings it out in type here in this chapter. We need to see how God has provided in our day and how He will provide for the continuation of the testimony right on to the end. It depends on our keeping to the divine appointment.

G.T.McC. It says in relation to the early believers, "And they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers", Acts 2: 42. Is that a similar thought to what you have in mind as to divine territory, because that was a provision, was it not?

P.v.d.B. I am sure that is right. That is how the dispensation started and how it will finish; that is to say, what marks the completion of the dispensation is that those available are related to what was from the beginning as John speaks of it, "that which was from the beginning", 1 John 1: 1. And then he speaks of the apostles' fellowship: "that ye also may have fellowship with us"; it was the fellowship of the apostles, what they had persevered in at the beginning. It might be that John was the only one who remained of the apostles, but there it is, the apostles' fellowship. And he says "our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ". I think we get that here in this chapter, the father and the son going together and how

we are related to that: "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them", John 17: 26.

H.J.G. Is that not interesting that it comes in here, God's own word, "thine only son, whom thou lovest"?

P.v.d.B. Yes; it is the first time love is referred to in Scripture, and it brings out the highest feature of it, in type the love of the Father for the Son. It is at the end of John 17 that the Lord asks the Father "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them". Now John was very closely related to that; in the bosom of Jesus he learned very close relations and affections, and he shows in the end how in spite of all the breakdown that has come in we can be related to what is from the beginning.

D.McPh. Is that why the Lord emphasises "where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them", Matt 18: 20?

P.v.d.B. That is very helpful, and it is not a promise, is it? It is a consequence. I think we want to get that into our souls. "Gathered together unto my name" is not anywhere; it is not in any believers' meeting, it is the assembly.

T.K. That helps. There is a great deal involved in "gathered together unto my name". It involves consistency.

P.v.d.B. That is right. It involves that the assembly is divine territory, and "gathered together unto my name" involves the maintenance in responsibility of everything that is due to the Lord in the light of the assembly. So we do not relate the Lord to what we are going on with but we learn that we are on divine territory and we learn to be related to what stands in relation to the Lord on His terms. That is how the testimony will continue.

A.A. Is the mountain what you have in mind as the divine territory?

P.v.d.B. Yes, "On the mount of Jehovah will be provided". It is not anywhere; it is a question of learning things in the divine presence.

A.A. So Moses came to the mountain of God, and then God spoke to him. Is it that he came into divine territory in order that he might

be taken on as a servant?

P.v.d.B. I am sure that is right, and God made Himself known. God appeared to Moses and says that they shall serve Me on this mountain. God made His claims: "Let my son go, that he may serve me" (Exod 4: 23), and God was to be served in the light in which He appeared on the mountain of God; and it was there that Moses met Aaron, and he kissed him (see Exod 4: 27). That is where we find our relations together, on that level, not on any social or any other level but on the divine level as John presents it to us: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren", 1 John 3: 14. We are not loving them on any lower level than on the basis of the mountain of God.

A.A. After the Lord spoke to the disciples about building - "on this rock I will build my assembly" (Matt 16: 18) - in the next chapter He takes "them up into a high mountain apart", and there He is transfigured before them. Does that come in in what you have in mind?

P.v.d.B. I am sure that is right; and it is from that level that things can be met on the plain, from the level where the glory of Jesus was seen, where He was transfigured: "his face shone as the sun", Matt 17: 2. And Matthew being the administrative gospel shows a high mountain; and the end of that chapter shows how things will be provided for: the Lord says "give it to them for me and thee". The Lord is never baffled in anything that comes up in the testimony. "Then are the sons free" (v 25). "Let my son go, that he may serve me". We see the father and the son going together here; this is a very affecting chapter to our hearts.

H.J.G. The Lord is never baffled in any matter in the testimony, but for us to be in it involves our acceptance of that, does it not?

P.v.d.B. I am sure that is important. The great need is to be with Him; it is not claiming Him to be here, or claiming Him to be there, because there are so many companies of believers that have departed from the truth and claim the Lord's presence. The thing is to be with the Lord; that is of all moment; it is His assembly.

A.A. Have you something distinct in relation to each of these mountains?

P.v.d.B. There were evidently several mountains there, but God says to Abraham "offer him up for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of"; He does not define which. It was to come to Abraham later as to which one it was going to be, so that it is a question of moving in obedience to God as Abraham did, tried as he was, to find which of the mountains was the appointed one.

H.J.G. Would you say something about God trying Abraham and how we fit into that.

P.v.d.B. I think you could not have a greater trial for the faith of Abraham, in relation to all the promises that he had, than that the very one that he had been so tested in relation to - when finally the son of promise was there and everything you might say in Abraham's mind from that point onward was centred in relation to the promised heir - was going to be the one that he had to sacrifice.

Then as we read in Hebrews, he believed that God would be able to give him back in resurrection (see chap 11: 19); that is how far the faith of Abraham went, it went beyond nature.

H.J.G. Does our trial, in the sense that Abraham was tried, work out in the present testimony as being brought to the power of resurrection in some way?

P.v.d.B. I am sure that many of our brethren are greatly tried, especially in meetings where things are very small and you might wonder as to the continuation of the testimony in the place. But then we have to be restful as to the way the Lord is able to provide. You might say, How are certain matters to be worked out? And we might think that, according to our natural thinking, the matter is impossible; but then on the mountain of God it will be provided. We can be very restful that on the mountain of God it will be provided.

T.K. Does the second appearing to Abraham - "because thou hast done this" (Gen 22: 16) - illustrate the consequence you were speaking about?

P.v.d.B. I am sure it does. God honours faith. God honours what is maintained here in faithfulness, and God will come in in blessing; but we are tried. But then the trial of our faith brings out what is exceedingly precious as we have it in Peter's epistle: "more precious than of gold which perishes", 1 Pet 1: 7. Abraham was the man of faith - he is father of the faithful - and it is that line of things that will continue, and the Spirit will operate in relation to that. So in chapter 24 we have the assembly coming to light typically in Rebecca.

G.T.McC. The subject that you have introduced is a very interesting one, because God created the mountains as He did the valleys. Throughout the history, for instance in the time of the flood, there was mount Ararat. In the time of the children of Israel being led into the land there was mount Horeb and mount Zion; then there were the two mountains, mount Nebo where Moses was taken, and prior to that the mountain where Aaron was taken. And during the Lord's time there were the mountains around Jerusalem. It would appear that God is seeking to elevate our thoughts in relation to what we might consider as mundane or we might become lethargic, but we are lifted. The Lord went out to the mount of Olives for instance. It is a very interesting subject.

P.v.d.B. I am sure it is very helpful to see that we need to rise to the divine level, to find that we get elevated in our minds to what the mind of God is in relation to things. John was taken to a great and high mountain (see Rev 21: 10) and he saw the holy city coming down out of heaven. He reached an elevated point and could see the sum total of the work of God in spite of all the breakdown publicly; he could see what God will finally arrive at - His own work - in spite of man's failure. It is His own handiwork; "having the glory of God".

G.T.McC. We should relate our thoughts to God's thoughts rather than our thoughts towards God. Is that something that would help us?

P.v.d.B. I am sure that is most important. We had it in the preaching on Lord's day; "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your

ways my ways", Isa 55: 8.

R.A. Is this the highest mountain? I am asking that because it is the burnt-offering that goes up, one of the greatest of the offerings.

P.v.d.B. It brings out the fact that what God was going to secure for Himself was not going to be on the basis of *creation* but on the basis of *redemption*. The burnt-offering is the presentation of Christ as the One who fills the heart of God, His perfection, the fragrance of what His offering up to God meant when He offered Himself by the eternal Spirit (see Heb 9: 14), the fragrance of it, the grandeur of it.

H.J.G. You spoke of our need to recognise that we must accept the level of the assembly; that is, that the Lord "loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it", Eph 5: 25. Does that help us to see the level of His love?

P.v.d.B. That is the level of His love, that He said, I love. In the type in Exodus 21 the bondman says "I love my master" - that is love in relation to God; "my wife" - that is, as Mr Taylor said, horizontal, His love for the assembly; "my children, I will not go free": such was the Lord's committal.

R A. John in his gospel said "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (chap 1: 29); but then later he says "Behold the Lamb of God" (v 36), which is the burnt-offering, and the disciples then followed Jesus.

P.v.d.B. That is right. John presents the Lamb, and he says "(and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father), full of grace and truth", chap 1: 14. John saw what was set out in this chapter in Genesis, the perfect devotion in which Jesus moved, in perfect concord with the Father, with His will, with His pleasure; there was never one deviation in the relations between the Father and the Son. It was perfect oneness, "I and the Father are one" (John 10: 30), and you get a picture of it here; there is not a word from Isaac against what Abraham is doing, there is perfect submission, they two go on together. There is not a word of protest, there is only this question: "My father! And he said, Here am I, my son". What perfect relations! "And he said, Behold the fire and the

wood; but where is the sheep for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself with the sheep for a burnt-offering. And they went both of them together" (vv 7-9). I think it is very touching to see how perfectly the Lord Jesus went on, the Father and the Son, as seen in John's gospel particularly, moving on together, God having provided a sheep for a burnt-offering. It was in the person of His own Son, and there was perfect submission, but there was perfect correspondence in the relations between the Father and the Son. If you study John's gospel you can see how the Spirit's day is anticipated, and how John presents to us what is true in the relations of the Father and the Son, and that by the Spirit these things would have their effect in the saints. For instance, "As... I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of me", chap 6: 57. That was the character of the way Jesus lived in relation to the Father, and in which the saints would live in relation to Him. And in John 10: "I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father " (vv 14,15). Think of that level of knowledge! And in chapter 17: "that they may be one, as we are one" (v 22). This matter of oneness, and then the matter of affection, the way the Father loved the Son and the Son loved the Father, that that character of love was to be in the saints by the Spirit.

G.T.McC. Was that love protected from heaven when Peter intruded, you might say, at the mount of transfiguration? The voice was "*This* is my beloved Son: hear him", Luke 9: 35.

P.v.d.B. It was protected. What a rebuke that was! What a rebuke to our natural thoughts! We may think we can have our way in assembly matters but the Lord says in effect that there is only one assembly. There are not as it were three tabernacles, there is one assembly. The question is, Are we related to Him in relation to it? So many would just go on on a lower level, as if the Lord could be attached to anything in which man's thoughts, man's mind, had its way in the things of God. Holding the Head is an essential point at the present juncture.

D.McPh. At the end of Matthew's gospel the Lord says to His disciples "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you. And behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age". That is a wonderful thing that the Lord has provided in the teaching, as He says, "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you", but it is "to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", showing how what has come with the Lord coming into this scene and making everything known in the Holy Spirit here, too, there is to be nothing let down in relation to the divine system.

P.v.d.B. That is right. It is a broken number there, eleven, and the going to Galilee is a position of reproach. In Matthew the Lord is here; He is not seen as in Luke ascending up into heaven, but He is here in the testimonial setting; you might say the administration is here in assembly matters. We can count on the Lord. But the point is to be at the mountain which He has appointed; it proceeds from that point and from no other. And they come to that in spite of all the breakdown, in spite of all that has happened in the testimonial scene. We can see in Matthew how much there is in the way, that the gates of hades are operating against the assembly, and the way that the enemy is always at the assembly wherever there is any answer to the rights that God has, that the Lord has, in relation to the assembly. The assembly is always facing it. David comes to it in a very deep way: "this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel"; this was the ground.

G.T.McC. Is your point in verse 28 - "At that time when David saw that Jehovah had answered him in the threshing -floor" - that it was the place that God had provided at that point for David?

P.v.d.B. We have learned something of the threshing-floor in what we have been through, but there is something very positive that has come to light. It was at the threshing-floor that the oxen stumbled (see 1 Chron 13: 9); and why did they stumble? Because man's thoughts were brought into the things of God; the Levites were to

carry the ark, not the new cart. You cannot relate the Lord to what you think; the ark was preserved by God even while it was in the hands of the Philistines, but when the ark is back with Israel it is to be carried according to the divine commandment, and it is at the threshing-floor that we go through such experiences as David learned when the oxen stumbled and Uzza stretched out his hand and died.

G.T.McC. "And Solomon began to build the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem on mount Moriah, where he appeared to David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor", 2 Chron 3: 1. It is the beginning - a very interesting point.

P.v.d.B. It is.

R.A. This fits in with all the three scriptures read. Abraham saw the mountain on the third day, which is the resurrection side of things, is it not? The threshingfloor stands in relation to resurrection too, where the fruit of the death of the Lord comes in. And then the one in Matthew too, the Lord is in resurrection.

P.v.d.B. That is right. Oman was threshing wheat; it is resurrection. The wheat is what is related to the Lord, the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying (see John 12: 24).

R.A. It says "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied", Isa 53: 11.

P.v.d.B. Quite so. The Lord says in that section in John 12, "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit. He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If any one serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall be *my* servant" (vv 24 -26). That is a very positive result of the threshing-floor.

H.J.G. What you have been referring to about David and the threshing-floor, the one with the ark and now this one, brings out the priestly thoughts that David arrived at, does it not? There is a great need of that with us; we tend to be careless, or indifferent even, but if

we examined the way that David arrived at God's thoughts it would help us, would it not?

P.v.d.B. Quite so. He was greatly tried, Abraham was tried, and we will be tried, but if you read Psalm 132 you get a key, you get the secret of David's life. As a young man he heard of the ark and all his life stood in relation to a place for the ark, as Abraham's life stood in relation to the *promised* heir. But how tested David was, and you might say that at the darkest point in his history he comes to the ground for it; this was to be *Solomon's* foundation, this is where he arrives at the divinely appointed place. It is something to go through. We can see in the way matters proceed that the threshing-floor will yield something positive. Ruth came to light at the threshing-floor.

You might say things are pretty dark, and there always is an evening before a morning, as there was in David's life, and as there was in Abraham's life. The sun went down (see Gen 15: 12) and the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full (v 16), and what division there was, what Abraham had to go through! They had to go through a night before the morning, but it is there that God establishes His promises, and He establishes His promises again after Abraham had been obedient in the testing. So David comes to the point in his history where his life was related to a place for the ark, a place for the Mighty One of Jacob (see Ps 132: 5). I think dear brethren, if we seek to be in the light of these things, we are sure to be tried, but we find that this is the divine territory; God says "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it" (v 14).

T.K. "We found it in the fields of the wood" (v 6): 'found it' is the idea of certainty.

P.v.d.B. Yes, that is right. When you are young it is so important to have these things in your heart, that you do not miss the point of blessing, that you learn early to commit yourself to it, and find this is worth living for.

'Lord! let me wait for Thee alone:

My life be only this -

To serve Thee here on earth, unknown;

Then share Thy heavenly bliss'.

What a life of dedication Mr Darby's was! It was in relation to what he firmly had from God, the voice that came to him. You find that things are allowed to come in (and things have been allowed to come in amongst us) and David went through it, but he asked of God that he might not fall into the hand of man (see 1 Chron 21: 13).

D.McPh. It is a very deep thing to get some sense of the assembly of God. It says in 1 Tim 3: 16, "And confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in the Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations, has been believed on in the world, has been received up in glory". It is a tremendous thing to get some sense of that, is it not?

P.v.d.B. That is the mystery of piety. Now we know what has happened, and how piety has been thrown to the ground and called religiousness and all that; but how much piety is stressed in the epistles to a young man, to Timothy; and here it is, the mystery of piety, God has been manifested in flesh. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us", John 1: 14. That reference to piety comes in after Paul says "that thou mayest know how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house, which is the assembly... the pillar and base of the truth. And confessedly the mystery of piety is great". It is one thing; the assembly, the house of God, is bound up with the mystery of piety. The assembly is related to Christ, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us", and she is the pillar and base of the truth.

G.T.McC. It is really divine territory, what God has provided. And the instructions in the second epistle to Timothy in relation to what he was to do in a broken time is really the divine way - following "righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord", chap 2: 22. That is really where the Lord is, is it not?

P.v.d.B. That is right, and we should not lower the standard, because the house of God is the house of God even in a broken day, and we should not surrender the principles that govern it. They are as true today as they ever were, in spite of the breakdown.

J.N.M. I was just wondering about what we were reading on Lord's day in the Song of degrees: "Our help is in the name of Jehovah, the maker of heavens and earth", Ps 124: 8. Would that fit in with your thought as to getting to the mountain?

P.v.d.B. Yes, I am sure that is right. In the Songs of degrees you get the fifteen steps that lead to the inner circle in Ezekiel (see chap 40). It is the inner circle where the glory of God is; there are seven steps and there are eight steps. In the Songs of degrees - there are fifteen Songs of degrees, beginning with Psalm 120 - you can see how the house of God, the level as you say of the divine presence, is in mind. You are led up in experience in those Psalms; you go through deep things, you go weeping but you come back carrying your sheaves (see Ps 126: 6). It is like coming to the threshing-floor, and you learn things. But then you arrive at something, and when you come to the end of them you get brethren dwelling together in unity (see Ps 133: 1). There is the blessing of Jehovah, eternal life, and then in Psalm 134 the service of God proceeding; and in Psalm 135 you are beyond the Songs of degrees and you get a Hallelujah, you get the end in the presence of the glory of God. How God is holding to the original thoughts! We need to be greatly strengthened in relation to that dear brethren, whatever happens on the responsible side. Much has happened already; it happened in Mr Darby's time. Think of the breakdown in his time! It is said of brethren in those days that often the floors of the meeting rooms were wet because of the saints weeping for the state of things in the church. That was their day. Now we have had much light amongst us and there has been much departure from it; but David says "let me not fall into the hand of man", 1 Chron 21: 13. You think of what has happened and then can see how God deals with a matter and how it has a very positive issue. Here in Matthew we get a broken number but the Lord is not defeated, and He goes on in spite of what the conditions are. He tells them to go to the mountain which He has appointed; "the eleven disciples went into Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they did homage to him". It says in verse 10, "Fear not; go, bring word to my brethren that

they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me". It is not anywhere.

G.T.McC. In verse 16 it is "which Jesus had appointed them"; then he says "I am with you". What is the point of that? It is the mountain which Jesus had appointed them, but then He is with the disciples.

P.v.d.B. You can tell from that how the Lord will set on the dispensation and that He will complete it. He is like a mighty man running the race; you get a hint of that in Psalm 19. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (v 1), and then you get the sun "as a bridegroom going forth from his chamber". John the baptist saw Him coming that way; he says "He must increase, but I must decrease", John 3: 30. He saw the Bridegroom come out of His chamber, and the Lord as a strong man, as it says in that Psalm (v 5); He is seen as a strong man running the race. But then it goes on to say "the law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul", showing that it is not anything that is based on what we think but that it is according to His instruction.

G.T.McC. It would appear that "I am with you" relates to the place which Jesus had appointed them; they are compatible, are they not? "I am with you" would indicate that there would be that throughout the dispensation that would relate to this place that Jesus had appointed them.

P.v.d.B. Exactly, and that is never surrendered, and whatever happens in the testimony you can always fall back on that. The Lord will complete matters, He will see matters to completion and He is able for it. He says "All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth", and it is in that sense that He is the strong man that is running the race, He will see the dispensation through in victory. In a sense it is not our matter; it is His matter and it is our privilege to have part in it.

R.A. Do you see "I am with you" in the Acts? He says to Paul "Why dost thou persecute me?", chap 9: 4.

P.v.d.B. Whatever Paul had done, he was to go into the city and "it shall be told thee what thou must do " (v 6). Paul had to learn these

lessons; he had to learn that there was that in the assembly which the Lord recognised. The Lord says, you learn that, you go into the city. That is where things work out in administration, which is in keeping with Matthew.

T.K. I was just going to inquire about the last verse "behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age". I wondered if that was the consequence of observing all things whatsoever the Lord had enjoined them.

P.v.d.B. I think that is right. It is a consequence. If we recognise that the assembly is to be according to the divine pattern and that we are related to the Lord's matter on His terms and not on our terms we will prove the consequence that He is with us, without claiming it. We do not claim it, the great point for us is to be with the Lord.

Joshua says "Art thou for us, or for our enemies? And he" (that is, the man with the drawn sword) "said, No; for as captain of the army of Jehovah am I now come", Josh 5: 13, 14. Well, the Lord is continuing and the Spirit is continuing, and the Lord is faithful. We may be unfaithful but the Lord is faithful and the Spirit is faithful.

They are committed, and the point is for us to be committed, for divine Persons are going on and are going to see things through to completion even in a day of small things. It says in Zechariah 4, in a day of small things, that the hands of Zerubbabel are going to finish the house, but he has a plummet in his hand (see v 10) - it is to be according to divine standard. So everything is related to the way that God has come out, the way that God has appeared, in revelation. The assembly as the heavenly city is formed in the light in which God has revealed Himself in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; it is in that light that the assembly is formed, and she has the glory of God. It works out in administration and affects the way things are worked out in responsibility here.

TORONTO

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Key to initials

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otherwise shown)

THE CHILDREN'S KING

The children who beheld Jesus entering Jerusalem and cried "Hosanna" to their King saw no evidence of royal apparel or splendour. He was meek and riding on an ass and her colt, yet even then He was the King of kings. Faith however can at all times gaze upon His heavenly regalia as it is displayed in the early chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews. With the inward eye of the Spirit of God we can see His *crown* of "glory and honour". This is made even more lustrous to us because we know that He has suffered even to death at Calvary to uphold the rights of God and to save His people.

A king must have a *throne* from which to rule his subjects. King Solomon made a great throne all of ivory overlaid with gold and having six steps with statues of lions. Probably it was the most magnificent of all time, yet it was only for a time. But the throne of Jesus, the Son who is worshipped by angels and mankind, is very simply said to be "for ever and ever". With all its strength and excellence it is a throne of grace to which we may come for help freely and at all times. No enemy can defy this throne. Just as Solomon had a *footstool* of gold fastened to his throne, so it has been decreed that the enemies of God's King will be made the footstool of His feet, and thus even add to His serenity.

The fact that the *sceptre* of Christ's kingdom is one of uprightness shows that grace is never at the cost of righteousness.

A king's sceptre is a straight rod or staff of some precious metal and is an emblem of his authority. The golden sceptre held out to queen Esther assured her of the king's favour just as the glad tidings of Jesus presented freely to us assures us of God's loving-kindness.

With the sceptre is the *orb* of wide dominion. It is in shape like a globe and is held in the hand. Though not mentioned by name in the Scripture it is seen in the fact that the Son of man has been set over all the works of God's hands.

The special dignity of a king is seen in his *anointing*. Jesus has been anointed "with oil of gladness" above His companions. How

we rejoice with Him! As believers we also have royal privileges which require of us that we should love righteousness and hate lawlessness, which is sin. The great *sword* of the kingdom, much more than razor-sharp, is the living word of God. Even earthly monarchs have felt the lifesaving effects of that sword. Once, after hearing a preaching on the second coming of Jesus, a longing was expressed by the queen Victoria that the Lord might come during her lifetime. Asked why she had this earnest desire she said, 'I should so love to lay my crown at His feet'. Do His glories stir your heart too?

J.C.Evershed