

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 114

September 1982

Contents

GLORY IN CHRIST AND IN THE ASSEMBLY

GOD HAS MADE US TO REJOICE

JESUS

THE CHILDREN OBSERVED

GLORY IN CHRIST AND IN THE ASSEMBLY

A.J.E.Welch

John 8: 58; Revelation 21: 10

The time of the Supper left with me a very strong impression - I could say, I think, more distinct than I have ever known - as to who Jesus is, and this scripture in John 8 came to mind; "Before Abraham was, I am". We have come to a singular moment in the testimony, singular from two viewpoints: on the one hand there is the bitterness, many-sided character, and persistence of Satanic attack against everything which is of God; on the other hand we find it a time of remarkable disclosures. I believe we find that individually, and distinctively we find it as assembled, and the divine glory enters into both. We are to think, as we read a chapter like this, of the glorious Person of Jesus (once spoken of as the Man of John 8) facing the persistent bitterness, the cold, calculated bitterness of Judaism at its centre; we see Him never yielding a fraction and yet, in a grace which surpasses description, reasoning out things with these religious men. How bitterly everything in them was against Him, but He went on. He speaks to these men of Himself, earlier in the chapter, as "a man who has spoken the truth to you" (v 40). He went on and spoke the truth to them. It seems they were impenetrable.

There was something there, such as religious human flesh, which seemed to be impenetrable even when the glory of such a Person was before them. It is a grievous thing, dear brethren, that we might be impenetrable when such glory is really in view. It was there in His person, and it was expressed in clear, positive appeal in His words.

The testimony to these men was perfect and complete, but such is human flesh that they were impenetrable. I do not leave aside, in saying that, the governmental side of this matter under God's hand in reference to the Jews; but we see what this human condition involves in a certain impenetrability, even when glory is in view.

These elements of bitterness we know today in different ways in the scene of things around us, where the enemy's attack is so persistent. We have to say, too, and it is a most humbling thing to

have to say, that there are matters among us that have gone on a long time, more than one of them, and I do not just speak of this city or of any city. The enemy is so persistent. The answer is in the glory of the Person, the One before us here, who is "over all, God blessed for ever", Rom 9: 5. That brings its searching, beloved brethren. It always must.

I wonder if we sufficiently maintain the reverence that is due to Christ in all His relations with us, or whether we may be careless in expression, or in our minds be regardless of the glory that is there in Jesus. If He speaks, the speaking is divine speaking. He has absolute divine right in that regard. The Father has such right, the blessed Spirit has such right. It is interesting to reflect how the beloved apostle could write to Timothy, in his first letter, of "how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth" (chap 3: 15), and then go on at the end of the same letter to speak of God "dwelling in unapproachable light", chap 6: 16. It is light; it is not darkness. But those two references, and others perhaps in that first letter to Timothy, are calculated to give him, and us, the sense that we constantly have to do with God. We are not to be careless in these things; we are not to be casual in taking them up. We are not to be loose, nor reluctant to face the searching which the prophetic word, and which the truth itself, will always bring. I say this as feeling it for myself; I am not fastening it on anybody else. Why should it be that we sometimes seem to lack power in the application of the truth? Maybe we are not sufficiently in touch in reverential relations, in the acknowledgment of glory in the Father, the Son and the Spirit; there must be the recognition of the right of Each in relation to divine things, the recognition of the right of Each to speak, to communicate, and to secure an answer to the communications. Dear brethren, I trust I have made myself plain as to this. As we come into God's assembly we are in a sense on holy ground. This must ever be remembered. It is no place for careless behaviour. I am not imposing any legal requirement; I would not seek to do that. But let our spirits be kept in the reverential sense of what is due in the

assembly of the living God. Let us speak, not in ill-considered phraseology, but as the scripture says, "in words... taught by the Spirit", 1 Cor 2: 13. That expression comes into the epistle to the Corinthians, where maybe on account of the character of the city there might be speaking with a certain looseness, but it is not to be. As before God we would use "words... taught by the Spirit".

That impression on Lord's day has stayed with me. I believe we are to be more reverential, regard more the divine glory, who the Father is, who the Son is, who the Spirit is, and the absolute divine rights which They have. Yet how low Jesus came, going, as we have sung, to the cross of shame, staying a relatively lengthy period among these men, and as He said, speaking the truth to them. Oh, the grace of Jesus! Does it affect us to realise not only where He came, but who it was and who it is that came there?

But then there is glory standing related to a creature vessel, the assembly. I touch this but briefly, but it belongs I believe to our subject. What do we bring into the assembly? How much there is that we happily and freely and with divine support may bring in, and it leads to the edification of the beloved saints and fruit resulting therefrom for God Himself. What a place of speaking the assembly becomes, what a place for right activity, controlled activity under the headship of Christ and in the grace and supply of the Spirit. What a sphere of things it is! Yet we recollect always, glorious as the assembly is in the light of this second scripture, that we are speaking of a vessel which is *creature*. But what grace it is, beloved brethren, that gives us light as to these things. I still recall the words of a brother when serving here recently, referring to the glories of which we could freely speak with the Spirit's gracious help, and saying to us "what manner of persons ought ye to be", 2 Pet 3: 11 (A.V.).

What manner of persons ought we to be? Here we have glory before us in a remarkable vessel; we have been called to have part in it, and in its present situation to have a full part in it, an active part in it, yet always a humble and dependent part in it. What grace it is, but are we answering to it? Are these fine features of the assembly coming out among us? We have here an administrative situation, the

city coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God. Everything there is of Him and according to Him. There is no trace of defect anywhere. What a place that vessel occupies! I could not say much about "having the glory of God", but it is a very attractive expression, a creature vessel being presented which has from God a certain glory, in view here of the place it shall yet fill in a day to come, in the radiant expression of Christ in administration.

The standard is there and it is a glorious one. The Lord will help us, I believe, in administration, to hold it in relation to Himself - to the Father, to the Son, to the Spirit, in that divine glory and unique right of power which is Theirs. It is to come into expression in activity in a creature vessel, and beloved brethren, God has called us to have part in that in its present phase. May we have part in it in such manner as shall answer to the presenting of the divine view of it in this scripture, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

23 March 1982

GOD HAS MADE US TO REJOICE

J.C.Evershed

Nehemiah 3: 15; 12: 36-43

My immediate point, dear brethren, is the stairs that went down and the stairs that went up; the same stairs, doubtless. It came into my mind at the time of the Lord's supper a week or two ago, in connection with the downward movements of the Lord Jesus and His upward movements. We are not told how many steps there were in these stairs. It is a familiar thing to us to go over the seven steps that the Lord Jesus took downward according to the second chapter of the epistle to the Philippians. He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, and that the death of the cross, but beloved, the Lord Jesus went lower than that; He stooped down into the tomb, He went down to the heart of the earth, was three days and three nights there. Man has been able to go upwards about a quarter of a million miles; when it comes to going downwards I think two miles is about the maximum. It shows how little even the greatest of us has been able to trace the way in which the Lord Jesus went down to the heart of the earth. If it were a physical matter it would be about four thousand miles, but it is a moral thought. I draw attention to it, brethren, because we have young people with us, and even some older ones who may be worried about sins after conversion, or we might become anxious about the vulnerable condition that God has been pleased in His wisdom to leave in the believer. This is not a condition that has to sin, but a condition that is vulnerable to sin, and it might be a cause of anxiety to a believer. But the Lord Jesus has bottomed the whole matter; deep into the heart of the earth. We speak of bottoming things, and it is right that we should, but the Lord Jesus has been right to the bottom of the whole matter of sins and sin, and settled all for the glory of God.

But then, these stairs went up as well. So we can take account of the Lord Jesus in the glorious upward movements which He took in rising from among the dead, moving about in a spiritual way, and

yet pleased to take flesh and bones condition as suited His purpose amongst His own; then ascending in the attitude of blessing His people and going up through all the heavens. Think of Him passing through the realm of the angels! They would remember having broken bounds at the time of the nativity, coming down and giving glory to God. What would they do when the Lord Jesus went up in the majesty of His Person and of His own movements? He would pass by all the principalities and powers; they would recognise in Him the Head of all principalities and powers. What about evil beings in heavenly places? They would recognise that their doom was finally sealed. Think too of the Lord Jesus going right up into the presence of the Father. So it is now characteristic, dear brethren, of the believer that he sees Jesus, who was made some little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.

I think there is more also than that for us in this present time. This book is a very interesting one. It has often been referred to, but having before us the verses which I have read I have thought of two points. One was that we have, writing this book, a man who humbled himself and was exalted, and who raised the tone of the whole of the people of God in Jerusalem in a permanent way. At the end of the book Nehemiah could speak of having made provision for God's service in an ample way. The Lord Jesus humbled Himself and He was exalted. He did not need to be humbled; He was humiliated but not humbled. We may need to be humbled. I believe we often do, but it is in humbling ourselves that it is in God's ways to exalt us. Nehemiah was quite a great man. He was the king's cup-bearer, the last in the chain, I suppose, of the defence of the person of the king, tasting his wine and his food to see that it was not poisoned. Also, it seems that he was a man who was there to cheer up the king, because the king was upset when Nehemiah was sad. But Nehemiah was prepared to sacrifice all in order to be with his humble people, the people of God. He was prepared, moreover, when at Jerusalem, to go out at night to view the city. There was a way that he could not get through, it was too low for his ass to pass.

I suppose he had to get off and go on foot. He was a man who demeaned himself, but as such he was one whom God exalted. He used him, as I said, to raise the tone of the whole people of God.

These features we need individually, and we are always in need of the tone of the assembly being raised.

Hanani was a man who came and brought news to Nehemiah about the condition of the people. He was deeply concerned about it, and you find, as he took that humble ground that he became ruler of half Jerusalem. Well, that shows that persons are being promoted; that is what is happening; persons who are ready to humble themselves are being promoted, even as Nehemiah was.

It is remarkable the influence that Nehemiah had upon the people, especially in the building of the wall, which I suppose has relation to the protection of God's interests here. This is what we are set for, beloved, to maintain and to protect what is precious to God in this scene in the way of service and testimony. This chapter 12 is one of the most thrilling chapters in the whole of the Scriptures, showing how persons were able to work together in order to accomplish the protection of what was for God's pleasure. What would you think of a building company that included a high priest, goldsmiths, perfumers, young women, street-traders, besides other unnamed persons? But they were all there together, working at the work. One group built about half a kilometre of the wall. They were not just building a piece of the wall; in their own minds they were building the whole wall. They were doing what they could towards it, and I do not think you would have been able to see where one builder finished and where another began. Thus I think it is with us, dear brethren, that whilst we are thankful to have our little work to do over against our own house or wherever it might be, even a second piece, let us have the whole in view in order that we may be working together and working hard. Some of the builders, it says, did not put their necks to the work. There was some reserve, but nevertheless they worked at it and the whole became a wall.

Not only was the wall for the protection of what was for God's pleasure but it was in order that the service of God might be carried

on in an ample way and in a way suited to a time of recovery, in which in a certain sense all that had appeared to be lost was now recovered and brought into the praise-system of God. It even says that the choirs stood in the house of God, and it reads as if the service went on in the house of God. On other occasions the glory of God had been in the house and the privilege of service could not go on. But the latter glory of the house was greater than the former, and I think that was because they were able to continue serving God as they did. There were the instruments of David too; they would have been about six hundred years old, but they were not any the worse for that but were brought into use in this time of recovery.

What David introduced represents something peculiarly jubilant in connection with the service of God. It was not in the older system, great as it was, but David introduced singing and these instruments of music which appear here in a recovered form. I suppose the instruments of David would be the saints viewed in a sense that they can be made vibrant according to what is needed in the service of God. To what extent, beloved, do our hearts respond or vibrate, as a deep-sounding or a stringed instrument would, in connection with the service of God when the Lord presents Himself to us, when we have the Holy Spirit before us and when we approach the Father? To what extent are these things really true of us or are we put to shame by these men in the time of Nehemiah? I have to ask myself these questions but am making myself bold enough to bring them before the brethren as well.

But this jubilation I wanted to speak about just a little, as to the instruments and the choirs, that the jubilation was not out of control.

You will notice that when they went up these stairs, or rather just before that, in verse 36, it says "and Ezra the scribe before them". I think that suggests that there was not only leadership but control in connection with the truth, because a scribe would be one who understood the principles and the value of the truth in the way in which it was brought out and made known and recovered. Then you find in verse 38 that Nehemiah himself went with the people, and there were the rulers as well. It seems to me that the whole matter

was under control. I do feel for myself that one needs to raise the spiritual tone of oneself, and would endeavour to do that of one's brethren. So that it says "the singers sang loud", yet there was control, because the overseer is mentioned. Then it says "they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced; for God had made them rejoice with great joy". Beloved brethren, one may say to me, You do not know how low I feel sometimes. Well, perhaps I do know how low you feel sometimes, but let us get this into our constitution, that God has made us to rejoice, and as we rejoice our joy will be heard afar off, for the Lord's Name's sake.

LONDON

23 February 1982

JESUS

E.C.Burr

John 20: 30,31; 21: 7 (first sentence)

When John wrote his epistle he says "it is the last hour", 1 John 2: 18, and I seek to inquire now as to the character of things that John brings before us in the last hour. For this I look at the end of his writings. If we look at the ends of the writings of Paul he ends nearly every one with a reference to grace in some, way or another: "Grace be with you" (Col 4: 18), "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit", (Phil 4: 23), "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all", 2 Cor 13: 14. Paul closes his letters with the desire that grace may be left upon the brethren. May it be left upon the brethren. As we go away from this occasion according to the will of God on the Lord's day, may there be a sense of grace upon the brethren. May there not be anything as it were stirred up. May we know what the poet says:

Drop Thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease,
Take from our souls the strain and stress
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

That is by Whittier who I think is an American poet. But let it be, beloved. We may speak of things that relate to conflict but let us go away with rest in our souls and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with our spirit.

But John does not conclude his writings with references to grace. In fact he does not close his first epistle with anything in a certain sense; he just stops writing: "Children, keep yourselves from idols". And you turn the page thinking John would have something more to say, but he has nothing more to say: that is his letter. What you will find in the conclusion of John's writings is Jesus. I could have read the last verse of the last chapter; it is Jesus - the world

could not contain the things that He did. If you go to the book of the Revelation; "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star", chap 22: 16. If you go to the end of his first epistle - the second and third epistles are kind of love notes, one sent to a sister and one to a brother, just little notes full of substance - he refers at the beginning of the last chapter again to Jesus; "Every one that believes that Jesus is the Christ" (v 1), and "he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (v 5). It is to me as if John's heart was so full of Jesus that it must break through. The brethren will remember how in beloved Mr Darby's writings there comes a point when he just writes, O Jesus, Jesus. Think of that!

I therefore seek help from the Spirit to say a word to the brethren about Jesus in the context of the last verse of chapter 20 and the verse in chapter 21 that I have read. But I suggest, brethren, that we might in our spirits pause for a moment and ask ourselves, What have I thought about Jesus today?

Room for pleasure, room for business,
But for Christ the crucified -
Not a place that He can enter
In the heart for which He died?

Has that been true of brethren today? Have you any room for Jesus? Just go back over the day and ask yourself, Have I today had any room for Jesus? I know you have been occupied with one thing and another - so have I - but have you any room for Jesus? John would say, There is so much in my heart about Jesus that it will break through in everything that I write. Paul does not say much about Jesus by that Name. That remark may surprise you but you will not find that it is the Name Paul uses most. "Him that is of the faith of Jesus" in Romans (chap 3: 26), "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow" in Philippians (chap 2: 10) and no doubt other references that I cannot just offhand recall. (The epistle to the Hebrews has several references to Jesus). But John is full of Jesus and he, as I say, writes for the last hour; he writes for us, and he writes for us about Jesus. Now I just ask the brethren again, Have

you had any time for Him today? If we are left here tomorrow I urge you to make time for Him tomorrow, be like John and have Him so much in your heart that something about Jesus must come out.

In the verses that I read in chapter 20 two things are said about Jesus; "these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God", and John looks on to a consequence of that: "believing ye might have life in his name". I know that I do not have to introduce Jesus to anybody here. I do not have to tell you who He is, I do not have to tell you what He has done.

Jesus!, my Saviour, Shepherd, Friend,
Thou Prophet, Priest, and King.

Is it not all true to us all? But just dwell on it for a moment that John has written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ. In his gospel he had set this out in a person with whom Jesus had to do.

The Lord heard what they were saying about Him and about baptism and He went and sat as He was at the well, but He did not, I think, sit there exactly as the Lord, He sat there as Jesus. And what came out of that interview - one of the longest interviews He had with any individual in the Bible - is that it leads a woman to this; "Is not he the Christ?", that is, she had some impression that there was a Man there who was different from other men, a Man who could speak to her about her sins, but would speak to her at much greater length about the Spirit, and the Father, and God. And she says, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?", chap 4: 29. Beloved, have you had that interview and found Him to be the Christ, the Man that God has set up above every other man? We speak about the saints and we view them as an anointed company, a company in which the Spirit is able to bring out divine counsel and divine wisdom; but there is one Man who is the Anointed. As we well know, the title "the Christ" has a great deal to do with His relations with the nation of Israel because in the other language it means the Messiah. If you look back through the Scriptures you will find that the Messiah must be the Son of God, you cannot escape it. It is not an ordinary man, no man can claim to have that place. Look at Psalm 2: "And I have anointed my king

upon Zion, the hill of my holiness... Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; I this day have begotten thee" (vv 6 & 7). The glory of what God has brought in in Christ in relation to the nation of Israel, and all their hopes so far as there is what is of God among them - what glory there will be in the day when Israel acknowledges its Messiah. What a wonderful day for them! What a day for us to see that nation on the earth acknowledging their King coming to them, they will look upon Him whom they pierced, but they will find that He has come to them meek and lowly and bringing salvation and that will be their portion from Him.

But if He is the Christ, He is more than what belongs to Israel, more than Israel's King, more than Israel's expectation. Does not the prophet say "The desire of all nations shall come", Hag 2: 7? Think of that! That is what the Christ will be, what Jesus will be, the desire of all nations and He will come. And when He comes He will satisfy the desire of every living thing. What a great thing it is to be able to serve in any company where there is any degree of satisfaction in Jesus! We get occupied with sorrow and with administration and with problems and all that kind of thing - and in many senses rightly - but is your soul not satisfied with Jesus? If He is the Christ He is the Man whom God has chosen for every man, to bring blessing to every man by way of satisfaction, not just by way of salvation but to bring satisfaction into every heart by way of what He is in Himself; the Christ - Jesus to be fed upon, to be the nourishment of our souls, to be looked at as the one Man whom God has chosen above every other man. What dignity! What glory! What an answer to His rejection! I well remember it being said that the world goes on as if Christ was not rejected: we should not do that but go through this world in the light of the fact that Jesus has been crucified here. And it was Jesus who was crucified, His own blessed Person - Jesus. As you contemplate the cross you see over it, This is Jesus. Is your heart not moved by that, to find there the Man in whom God has found His rest and will find it for ever, the Man that brings rest into souls, the Man who says "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest"? He says "Take my

yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls", Matt 11: 28,29. What it is to find that Jesus is the Christ!

Now there is a cause for finding that Jesus is the Christ. If you look at the last chapter of John's first epistle you will find that he who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God; that is to say, it is as the result of divine workmanship in you. This cuts at the root of merely intellectual assent to what Jesus is; it is the result of divine workmanship that one appreciates the Christ. Let me just encourage you, beloved brother or sister, young or old, that, if you believe in Jesus and your sins are forgiven and it is the substantial conviction in your soul, it is a token that God has worked in you. Now cling to that. Do not look around for other explanations of the work of God. You may have exercises in working it out into result but it is a sign that God has worked in you. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ it is a sign that you are begotten of God.

But consequences flow from that; he that loves Him that begot loves him that is begotten. Therefore a consequence of believing that Jesus is the Christ is, without using the expression in any narrow sense, that you love the brethren. The result of loving Him that begot, that is God, is that you love him that is begotten, because you are all in the same family and are all bound together by the fact that you are begotten of God. What relationships! Some rejoice in their natural relationships, some find new natural relationships. If I could just illustrate this, babies are born to one's brother or sister and you find you are in a new relationship; it may take a little while to get used to it, but there it is a new relationship. But have you become accustomed to this blessed relationship that springs out of the fact that you are begotten of God? Think of the family of God, think of it represented here this afternoon. As you look round you cannot see it - all, of course you cannot, but the family of God is represented here.

Now if I may go on in 1 John 5, the consequence of that loving is that you keep His commandments. Scripture is very consistent, it does not put everything into one verse, but if you follow it through

you will find that the reason you believe that Jesus is the Christ is that God has worked in you, and if God has worked in you and you are begotten of God, then you love the others who are begotten of God. But then there comes a test, you keep His commandments.

That is what John goes on to, the family of God keeps the commandments of God. If we wish to have unity, beloved - and who does not? - let us remember that the family of God lives by the commandments of God "and his commandments are not grievous".

It is a great thing to find them. I suppose when we have families, sometimes they think our commandments are grievous. They say, Why do you want me to do that? But even in our natural families the children sometimes come to it that the commandment was best after all and as they look back they say, It may have been trouble for the time but now I see it should not have been grievous. And the divine commandments are not grievous. The effect of keeping His commandments is that family relationships are preserved. If you want disorder in the family let everybody do their own will; if you want unity in the family of God let there be a keeping of the commandments of God. All these things run together in 1 John 5, step by step you can work it through - divine workmanship, you love God, you love one another, you keep His commandments - and thus the divine family is preserved in its unity and integrity; and, beloved, I could almost say - I would not say it without qualification - that there is no other way. I think that if there is another way, when you looked at it you would find that it was working out again through these same channels, and if you apply these channels to another way you will find that you have to go through the same kind of experiences and relationships. Beloved, let us learn what it is, as believing that Jesus is the Christ, to find family relationships in affection and obedience and there we shall find the unity which is intended to mark the children of God. "See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God".

Now John in his gospel goes on further: "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". Now there is something fresh, the Son of God. You might say that this whole gospel is about the Son of God.

Of course it is, it is what John is really telling us about. Paul tells us what the consequences of His being known in sonship are for us, that we are taken into favour in the Beloved (see Eph 1: 6). But John brings this out; "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". This involves very deep things for us - that God has been made known in this blessed Man who is Himself the Son of God. He came into that position but God has made Himself known and He has made Himself known in His Son. And when John and the other disciples watched Jesus they said it is like an only begotten with a father (see John 1: 14). What we can see there is Somebody setting out sonship. But what He was setting out was the reality of what sonship in relation to God is: the Son of God; how blessed! What a wonderful thing to contemplate! As we know, chapter 9 - the other great landmark in John's history of the Lord's dealing with individuals - brings a man to this, that he was talking to the Son of God: "dost thou believe on the Son of God?... And who is he... that I may believe on him?... Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he" (vv 35-37).

Beloved, when did the Son of God last speak to you? Can you remember? Did the Son of God ever speak to you? It was Jesus that spoke but it was the Son of God, and what He is communicating as He speaks to you is the blessedness and fulness of what there is in relation to Himself.

'As the Man of all Thy counsels,
Who the universe will fill':

that is the Son of God. And there He is, "Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he". Have you never found the refreshment of conversation with the Son of God? It is outside the world, outside all its hostility, outside every difficulty - communion with the Son of God, how blessed and how deep! And it is just Jesus. We gather up the titles He has in His Person and in His offices but behind it all is Jesus, just Jesus; "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God". Have you believed on the Son of God? Wonderful things it does for your soul when you think of what He is in the excellence of His Person - unable to divorce His

deity and His manhood, the two things inseparable but never confused - it is Jesus and He is the only Being in the universe of whom those things can be said, that He is God but He is Man, and He is the Son of God. What opportunities for getting to know Him better in the depth of what He is in His Person! Think of Paul: "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. Have you arrived at that point that it was Jesus who delivered Himself up for you but it was the Son of God, as excellent a Person as that? You wonder that as Christians have sought in the past to say things about His Person, the question has arisen, Well, who died on the cross? You have that profound answer that the Man who died was God. As I say, the reality of His Being is inseparable but never confused. And there He is, the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me. But He did more than that; He opened up the place where He is known as the Beloved, the centre of the Father's affections, the Man in heaven as the One in whom all God's thoughts centre and the One to whom we are drawn and in whom we find our own place. Did you not sing the hymn with some enjoyment?:

Son of God, with joy we view Thee
Of God's love the object meet;
While, Lord Jesus Christ, 'tis through Thee
All our blessing is complete. (No.161)

What, beloved, are your personal relations with Jesus? They are something greater than every administrative question. Sometimes you talk or write to one and another, and you get all the current history of what may be going on here or there, but have you any room for Jesus in your letters, in your conversation, in your telephone calls? Putting in parenthesis for the moment the desire that we have that every current assembly exercise should be resolved to God's glory, would you not feel charmed if you had a letter that said, Today I thought this about Jesus and this is what I got when I spoke with the Son of God and He with me? What blessedness! How much better than everything else! - things that are more excellent which we have in communion with Christ. One does

not leave the exercises aside: who could? But beloved, do we not want more of Christ?

More about Jesus would I know,
More of His grace to others show,
More of His saving fulness see,
More of His love who died for me.

But the chorus is, More, more about Jesus. Would you not like that, beloved? Why is there not more conversation amongst us about Jesus? Why is there not more room for Him, more ability to speak on His things and about Him?

But the knowledge that He is the Son of God also has consequences according to 1 John 5: 5; "Who is he that gets the victory over the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" Have you ever thought of that? You may have problems in the world, and who does not? There is a need among us for sharpening up our sensibilities as to good and evil. There is a need, if I refer back to what I have said, for more attention to the commandments of the Lord in relation to a number of things, but there is a need for overcoming the world. Beloved, the world and its elements are in us all and they appeal to us all and they draw us all away and you find evidences of it, you might say here, there and everywhere among us. Years ago certain things were said to be the bane of every local assembly. The things which were then spoken of exist today, they have not been eradicated; they were mixed marriages and the radio (for the radio now read TV) - those things have not been eradicated. But "Who is he that gets the victory over the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" Why? Because that believer has another world; he has something more, something different, something where the Son of God is for God's pleasure now and eternally, and he finds his rest and satisfaction in that world where Jesus is, as the Son of God, filling everything to the delight of the Father as He will fill it for ever, and filling it to the delight of every heart that believes in Him. If you want to overcome the world cling to Jesus as the Son of God. Ask yourself these old simple questions; Would Jesus do that? Could I imagine Him here or there or wherever

it is? And if you have any hesitation about the answer then you do not go there. The Son of God would not be there. In John 9 He was outside everything, and attractive outside everything; he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God is he that overcomes the world. And there you are, keeping the divine commandments and believing on the Son of God, and you are preserved in relation to the world where the Father has sway. The Father is over against the world, and Satan is over against the Son, and the flesh is over against the Spirit. The world is opposed to the Father but he that overcomes the world is he that believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

The consequence of this in the gospel is "that believing ye might have life in his name". Now does that not set you forward invigorated? Does somebody feel the need of stimulation? Different things stimulate different ones of us, some of us are stirred up no end by problems, but do you not feel stimulated by having life in the name of the Christ, the Son of God? And you can be here for Him, you can be here in a sense as His representative in the power of His Spirit because you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you have life in His name; that is to say, as you live it is He that is seen. As you live here people would be able to say, I saw something of Jesus today. Where did you see it? O, I saw so-and-so, and I saw somebody who had life in His name because he believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. These are the things to be coveted, beloved brethren. One thing that is needed amongst us, if I may venture to say so, is life in His name. It lifts us from the routine and from the ordinariness to which we so easily descend; and life in His name is something that needs to be ministered among us and the saints will respond to it. One thing I have the greatest confidence in in the present day is that what is in the body of the brethren will always respond to the Lord and His leading. May we minister to that, beloved. May we not minister to controversy and that kind of thing but may we minister to the body of Christ which will always respond to what is so excellent in Him as the Head.

Now I just add a word in regard to the verse I read in chapter 21 because there is this to be added; He is the Christ, the Son of God, but He is the Lord - "It is the Lord". And it was Jesus. It says "Jesus manifested himself thus"; but whilst they were out fishing at the sea of Tiberias - we all know about these men who went away fishing - here was Jesus and suddenly one of them said "It is the Lord"; not exactly that it is Jesus but it is the Lord. The last chapter of John's gospel is the Lord, the Lord, the Lord; Jesus is Lord; and it is about men who came to realise that it was the Lord. He could command creation - they could not draw the net for the multitude of fishes, and the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter "It is the Lord". Think of that! He was really submitting himself to the dominion of Jesus under that title Beloved have you confessed that Jesus is Lord? I do not mean just in a routine kind of way; your life will confess more than your words do. "It is the Lord". There He was, Master of creation; there He was, Provider for the saints, in a moment of weakness, a time of departure, a time of sorrow. Beloved Mr Lyon used to speak about this chapter as night, nakedness and nothing. But it was day and there was clothing and it was fulness because the Lord was there and the Lord was Jesus. Paul said "Who art thou, Lord? And he, said, I am Jesus", Acts 9: 5. And we find that just in a few moments, as Lord He puts everything right - cures the state of each of these men who had gone off fishing. "I go to fish": O, is the Lord in the fishing? No. Beloved, if you want to go somewhere else just ask if the Lord is with you where you are fishing. You may toil all night and catch nothing and you will be ashamed when you come home and you will be rather wet and miserable if you fish where the Lord would not have you fish. But when He is in command it is the Lord, a hundred and fifty-three great fishes and the net does not break; it is all brought safely to land because it is the Lord.

Then there is another thing that has to be learned; He puts everybody right and with the utmost gentleness. Has every one submitted to that gentleness with which Jesus puts them personally right? Then they have to learn that He is in charge of His servants;

that is what the chapter closes with. After this would Peter and John go fishing again without His direction? No. Would they do anything without His direction? No. The Lord has direction over His servants; and anyone who serves the Lord and is not in communion with Jesus as Lord in His service will find that he is wet and miserable in the morning and he has caught nothing. Beloved, let us be sure that we are with the Lord in our service. We hear a brother, for instance on a Tuesday night, say, What I had in mind to say was... (we all do it) but the saints want to hear what the Lord had in mind to say. He is in charge of His servants. Let us be sure, beloved, in all our activities, in our inviting of servants, in our sustaining servants in a meeting - who would be at a meeting and fail to support the brother who was serving in it in the truth? It would be unbrotherly so to behave - the Lord must be over it all, He must give direction and unless He has given the direction we shall again have night and nakedness and nothing. But when He does you are no longer a fisherman, you are a shepherd. That is what Peter found, he was a shepherd and he was under Jesus as a Shepherd but he knew Him as Lord. "Lord, and what of this man?" What answer would you expect to that question? You address Him as Lord and you say, What of this man? And you get the answer that you will always get: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me". He is in charge of His servants; it is the Lord but it is Jesus.

Well, beloved, I trust I have not been too long, but I just would wish to leave some impression on the saints that would if necessary draw us back to Jesus, and that the brethren might be sustained in revival in relation to the Christ, the Son of God and the Lord and find that whatever title He has out of those it is Jesus just the same. 'Our joy is full - we have Thee, Jesus, still' (hymn 229).

PLAINFIELD

28 May 1982

THE CHILDREN OBSERVED

I often wonder how many people who observe wild life and who write and read books on nature study realise that they themselves are being watched with far greater interest by the very Creator Himself.

Job, who was an evident student of creation, spoke to God as "Thou Observer of men". If you read this phrase without the last letter it becomes 'Thou Observer of *me*', and shines a strong light into both your conscience and your heart. But all is in view of blessing. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, when hiding in the midst of the trees of the garden of Eden - perhaps behind the tree of life which was in the midst - were seen by God. But the solemn question, "Where art

thou?", was not just a call to judgment; it was rather an expression of grief that the man so highly favoured did not respond to the heart that had so favoured him. It expressed a longing on the part of the Creator for communion and not for condemnation.

Many students use a microscope to reveal hidden details of the object under observation. The word of God acts upon us in the same way morally and reveals even the thoughts of our hearts and the intentions that give rise to them. No doubt the word of God is firstly the Scriptures but many other things may have the character of His speaking to us. Even a dumb sheass speaking with man's voice was used to expose the folly of Balaam's thoughts. Unconverted persons who have been saved from imminent death by drowning have said that at such a time the whole of their responsible life Godward has flashed across their minds. Many, in God's grace, have been converted by this means.

Those who study the heavens use a telescope to make their object appear nearer. In reading the parable of the wealthy father and the spendthrift son one has the feeling that the father had a kind of telescope always trained on his sinful son in the far country. By this means he was quick to discern the first sign of repentance. But more even than this, he was able to cover the distance and welcome the returning one. Surely there is in the Bible no verse other than Luke 15: 20 with as many as seven verbs of decisive and powerful action! The slaying of the fatted calf, like the death and shed blood of Jesus, met the requirements of justice and the father said "It was right that we should make merry and rejoice". Are you of the party?

J.C.Evershed