

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 265

April 1995

Contents

CHRIST AS FOOD

THE GLORY OF JESUS

CHRIST AS FOOD

John 6: 47-58; Exodus 12: 3-9; 16: 13-15; Joshua 5: 10-12

J.A.B. What is in mind is the way in which we can, through divine grace and love for us, feed on our Lord Jesus Christ as the only source of spiritual nourishment and sustenance. We are to be nourished in view of spiritual strength for the journey which we are on, with life in mind. John 6 seems to have that in mind: "I am the bread of life". It is a most remarkable scripture, and I would certainly need the help of those here to get from it the full import of what the Lord Jesus meant when He said these wonderful words. But He said them, and some of them at any rate are beautiful in their simplicity - "I am the bread of life", and "he that eats this bread shall live for ever".

When we look within there is much failure, but when we look to Jesus there is much to feed on and I wondered if we could be encouraged together. There are brethren here from many different circumstances and the Lord knows every circumstance. I wondered if we could see how He is available to us; He is not only to be our food, but He is available to us as our food. I thought we could look in the other scriptures read at these three types of the Lord Jesus as food for us - the passover lamb in all the beautiful simplicity and accessibility of the lamb in the house, "roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs shall they eat it": then the manna; the children of Israel did not know what it was, representing the lowliness and meekness of Jesus: then the old corn of the land.

These foods all depend for us on the death of our Lord Jesus. He says in verse 55 "for my flesh is truly food and my blood is truly drink".

It is only available to us as such because He went in to death. It would not have been possible for us to feed on Christ if it had not been for His death. That is an essential part of what we mean by feeding on our Lord Jesus Christ. These scriptures are full enough in themselves to help us to see the way in which the Lord Jesus is

available to us all, down to the very youngest believer, not only for our salvation, but for our nourishment.

R.D.P. It is a very remarkable sentence, "I am the bread of life". Could you say more about that? It is a striking expression.

J.A.B. I wondered if it implies continuity. It is not just that He was available at one particular point but "I am the bread of life" seems to mean that there is availability and accessibility of Him as a source of food to those who appreciate Him.

R.D.P. We have such a scant knowledge of this, yet you cannot help feeling that it is vital as it is what becomes in the believer. I suppose we need that at the present time.

D.B.B. Verse 45 says "Every one that has heard from the Father himself, and has heard of him comes to me". Could you say something as to the Father's operations that we might come to Christ?

J.A.B. If we are drawn to Jesus, we are drawn to Him by the Father. I trust that there is no-one here in this room today who has not had the experience of being drawn to Him. "No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him" (v 44). That is very wonderful. It is not just by accident, but in divine sovereignty there has been that drawing by the Father. But then as being drawn what do we find? We find in Him as a blessed divine Person all that we need.

D.B.B. That is what I thought. It is in one sense the Father's sovereign operation. Why has He called me and not someone else? As we get some sense of that in our souls we can feed more on Christ.

J.A.B. We get a sense of the Father's appreciation of that blessed One. It is a most wonderful thing, and the glory of it has impressed itself on me this week, that we can share the Father's appreciation of Jesus. As we do that, we feed on Him; He becomes our spiritual nourishment and indeed He is the only source of spiritual nourishment. We may develop a little in our appreciation of Him in

reading ministry, and we would all be able to say something of the food that there is as we read the good teaching, but it is in Him personally that this nourishment is known.

D.J.W. Is this presented as the food of believers? John presents that aspect, he wants to make 'believing believers' out of us. If we are to have life, we need to believe continually. This food involves the end of one order of man and the bringing on to view another order of man all together. I think we need some help on the disappearance of the old man.

J.A.B. I know I do; what you say is right. We are speaking to each other as those who have come to the Lord Jesus. We have been drawn to Him initially, knowing Him as our Saviour, knowing what He has done for us - salvation, reconciliation. These things are true as we have put our faith in Him, but in order to move forward, we need strength for the journey. Just as in natural life we need food, otherwise we will lose strength, so in spiritual things. He is the source of strength.

J.A.T. John writes "And the Word became flesh" (John 1: 14) - that is how it has come near to us to be available.

J.A.B. I am sure that is right, "the bread withal which I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". These things are very wonderful. They are too much for me, yet I believe that the Spirit would strengthen us to get a fresh appreciation of what Jesus is, not only what He was when He was here, great as that was, but what He is. As getting that living appreciation, do you think He becomes more to us and we are built up?

J.A.T. John in his writings makes Him so beautifully available, but it is for our spiritual apprehension, not for nature. At the same time he brings out His eternal personality. I wondered if to feed on Him we must appreciate who He was and is. "I AM" might involve that; it is veiled and yet in John 's gospel perhaps we can see who it was who became flesh, the "I AM".

J.A.B. I could not add to that, but I think that what you are saying opens up these wonderful verses that we have read. These were

the words of the Lord Jesus about Himself. What you say about the natural man not appreciating this is certainly true. I suppose people can go along to a certain extent with the lowliness of Jesus as an exemplary man. The human mind can appreciate to some extent the way in which He was here, but as soon as the thought comes in of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, His speaking of His death, the Jews react, they reject that. It is the same with all of us naturally.

P.H. Would "I am the living bread" bring it within our understanding. It is brought to us in a real way. Then He goes on to say that His flesh is truly food. I was wondering about the word 'truly': it is something beyond all apprehension down here because it is incorruptible. It is not something that can be added to, it is there in its perfection.

J.A.B. That is fine. He stands in all His intrinsic glory, does He not, and as the glorious Son of God, you might say He is ever beyond us. There is a way in which the Lord Jesus will ever be beyond our comprehension. And yet, as has been remarked earlier, He has come within our compass, "the Word became flesh", and not only that, through His death He has made Himself available for the nourishment of those who love Him. I think that is a wonderful thing. Maybe we could just get a fresh appreciation of the tremendous character of what it is that is made available to us as He speaks of Himself here as food.

A.K.T. "Not die", and "live for ever" - would you open up these two expressions for us?

J.A.B. The only impression that I had, and my thoughts as to these things are very simple, is that they speak of the enjoyment of eternal life. I trust that as gathered here today we might know a little of that, the enjoyment of eternal life. That kind of life is sustained by a different kind of food from what is natural food, do you think?

A.K.T. I am sure that is right. It is outside the natural order of things that is around us, sin and death. It is "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (see Rom. 5: 21).

D.J.W. Do you think it helps to see that the chapter is contrasting this living bread with the manna? The Lord said that one may eat of this bread and not die. The children of Israel ate the manna and died, but what is in view in this chapter as we feed on Christ is a living order of things that is self sustaining.

J.A.B. That is very interesting. Mr Coates comments that the availability of the Lord Jesus to us as food and drink as seen in John 6 has no type in the Old Testament. It is something new which the Lord Jesus Himself introduces as available to those who can accept His death for them. What we are naturally is put out of sight entirely, done away with in His death, and it is as accepting that that we can take in something of this blessed nourishment.

D.J.W. So the reference is not to bread which came down out of heaven, but it comes down. It is characteristic, it is that kind of man, the lowly, humble Jesus. It is such a contrast with human nature which is always on the up line. But this is what we feed on - another order of manhood altogether.

J.A.B. What blessing there is in it. He says "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him". I just have the impression that this is the only way in which our souls can be really nourished. There is no other way.

D.E.R. The challenge of John 6 is whether we are prepared to accept death to all that the flesh lives in and whether we want the life which we can find in Him above. But to feed on Him, we have to accept death to all that the flesh lives in naturally. Therefore this word was hard for the disciples.

J.A.B. I did not read verse 60, but it is salutary, "many therefore of his disciples having heard it said, This word is hard; who can hear it?". We have to accept that the Lord Jesus died not only to take away our sins but also to put what we are out of sight. What we are naturally is not acceptable in the sight of God and as we accept that the Lord Jesus becomes blessedly available to us as meat and drink.

A W. I was just thinking about verse 51 "I am the living bread which has come down out of heaven: if any one shall have eaten of this

bread he shall live for ever; but the bread withal which I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". Would that link with His giving Himself at Calvary?

J.A.B. Clearly the Lord Jesus was looking forward to His own sacrifice. Think of the feelings that would be in His holy mind as he said these words. In His death we have life, in His death we have food. What I would like to know more of for myself is that this is the only source of food. We try other things and they inflate us in the wrong way. That is why we may come shortly to the passover lamb. The bitter herbs and the unleavened bread were necessary. What we are in our intellects cannot feed on Jesus.

A.W. Intellect will not do. It is a Person. One whom we are to love and pray to and receive from, it is all in that blessed Person.

J.A.B. As we do that, our taste for this kind of food will be enhanced. We may not have much taste for it at first. The children of Israel tired of the manna - a very sobering thing. They said "our souls loathe this light bread" and they did all sorts of things to try and make it more palatable to them. But as we get a taste of Jesus in all His attractiveness I am sure that the Spirit's service would be that we are enhanced in our appreciation of this blessed Man.

R.D.P. In verse 41, He says "I am the bread which has come down out of heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we have known?". They did not seem to be able to get beyond the world of ordinary things, a world of what was really unbelief, that so easily marks us. Is it important to see that what we are speaking of here is beyond the ordinary workings of the human mind? It is an area of faith and belief. You get the impression that although the fathers ate the manna they never believed on it. It is as if we get more benefit from the manna than they did because we understand something of its spiritual import. We can take things and we can receive things, but we may not get the spiritual import of them.

J.A.B. Paul speaks of that in Corinthians: he says "and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink." (1 Cor

10: 3,4), yet they died. It says "they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them: (now the rock was the Christ;) yet God was not pleased with the most of them". What you say is very important.

The world would say that there is nothing in this. They would listen to our conversation today and say, what are you talking about? The Jews reacted in exactly the same way. What we are naturally, the way we think naturally, the human intellect, the use of logic, none of it can respond at all to what we are speaking of today. The humanity of Jesus is attractive only to those who have accepted His death for them.

R.D.P. What they said was not exactly evil: it was ordinary. We do tend to live in the ordinary quite a lot.

N.T.M. I was going to ask about whether the food, as well as being for our minds, is also for our affections. Do we need to keep both of those things together?

J.A.B. Our affections should be stimulated by the way in which His death was necessary for this food to be available to us. When the children of Israel fed on the manna, there was not exactly the thought of death in that, although it did speak of the lowliness and the humility of Jesus. But the passover lamb in Exodus 12 would be a demonstration of what you have said. The lamb, a yearling lamb without blemish, was in the house for four days and then it had to be killed and eaten by the household. Our affections would be constantly stimulated by considering the death of the Lord Jesus for us.

N.T.M. It has been said that the way the lamb is spoken of indicates that it became greater in their affection. I think it is the lamb to begin with and then it finishes up referring to your lamb. It is as though the moral, spiritual worth of our blessed Lord becomes greater to us. I suppose we have more access to Him as our affections are stirred towards Him.

J.A.B. That is very important. Do you think we have constantly to be on the alert against thinking of these things, reading about them and having them in our minds without being touched in our affections?

That can happen; I feel that for myself. Do you think that the Supper would keep our affections stimulated in respect of the death of the Lord Jesus? Is that one reason why we sit round these emblems every Lord's Day morning.

Ques. Is this essential for the support of our constitutions? Is life the divine objective? The life of Jesus was bound up in communion with the Father, who had sent Him. Our constitutions would be built up as we have the Father as resource for this kind of life.

J.A.B. I think we should ponder what you have said. The Father has in mind for us that we should feed on His beloved Son. The Father delighted to mark Him out when He was here. Think of all the sacrificial system in the Old Testament, speaking of the pleasure that God took in Jesus, these sacrifices of sweet odour that rose to God. What pleasure God took in the death of Christ. It is something which the natural mind just cannot understand, that the Lord Jesus was never more pleasurable to the Father than when He hung there on the cross. That must be beyond nature.

J.W. The life of the Lord Jesus was dependent on the Father, was it not? He did not draw anything from any other source and the life of the believer is dependent upon Christ. It is to deliver us from the world entirely so that we are kept dependent upon Him. He is our life.

J.A.B. I thought of the Passover in that regard. This was the food that they needed to give the strength for the journey out of Egypt. The blood was protection from judgment, and that is often taken up in the gospel, but the feeding on this lamb gave them the strength that they needed to go out of Egypt in rank.

J.W. It is a constitutional matter. The constitution was built up in them so that they left Egypt. We need a constitution to leave the world.

T.M. Referring back to John 6, it has been said that no one can really enjoy eternal life except that they are free from the fear of death. Do you think that the food of John 6 really is appropriate to deliver us from the fear of death?

J.A.B. That is very attractive. I would like you to say more about being delivered from the fear of death. As we put our trust in Jesus we know that He has overcome death, and that we are saved for time and eternity. Is the fear of death something else?

T.M. It is something that we need to be free from, the fear of death. People, all their life time, are in bondage through the fear of death, but that is something that we need to be free from. It is only as you are free from it that you can really enjoy eternal life. As facing the Jordan they had to have food in order to go across. I thought the food of John 6 was to build up within us a constitution, not only to free us from the fear of death, but that we might enjoy, really enjoy, eternal life.

J.A.B. That is very good.

D.E.R. The emphasis in John 6 is appropriating the Lord, not exactly as in death, but as He is now, and we finding our life in Him where He is now beyond death. We should be found in that real beyond death in spirit.

J.A.B. I suppose in one way the food in John 6 is beyond the type. You could say it embraces all of the types, even the old corn of the land. It is Christ where He is now as having been through death and now in glory and it is in that position that we can feed on Him and find our food and drink. That is very helpful.

D.J.W. Do you think that John 6 is a question of our affections? Exodus 12 is obligatory, "let them take themselves". It is not presented as optional.

J.A.B. What do you have in mind in saying that?

D.J.W. We would trust that everyone has started in that way, by taking for themselves what the death of Christ is as removing every judgment that lay upon us, to set us free in this way to step on to the road. But John 6 is addressed to disciples and even they go away back. It is a question of the stirring of our affections to feed on this new kind of life.

J.A.B. I am sure that is right.

A.K.T. You are not safe without the blood on the doorpost and the lintel, are you? But then inside the house, you feed on the sufferings of Christ, the Lamb roast with fire, the deep atoning sufferings of Christ for our sins.

J.A.B. I am glad you referred to that, "And they shall eat the flesh in that night". There is darkness outside. That is what the world is, a dark place. "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire", the fire of God's wrath against sin. You have referred to His atoning sufferings. How wonderful it is that we can feed on these things.

They are opened up to us in the Old Testament scriptures, in the Psalms and the prophets, in Isaiah 53. What a thing it is that those who love Him can feed on Him and on the way He went.

A.K.T. It is absolutely essential for every believer.

J.A.B. I feel that without feeding in this way we will have no strength for the journey.

R.D.P. The eating of the flesh in that night, roast with fire, was after the act of faith. The act of faith was to put the blood on the lintel and the doorpost and it was after that they were to eat the flesh. I wondered if it was important for us, as believing, that we immediately need this food; it comes in immediately. It is linked with the act of faith, but it is not just faith, not only our safety, but immediately we need this food for the constitution straight away.

J.A.B. It struck me that while the manna was food for the wilderness journey, the Passover remained; it went right into the land. And in days of recovery after breakdown had come in, the first thing that the people of Israel were recovered to was the passover. So that initial act of faith is essential, and I trust there is no one here who does not have faith in what Jesus has done for them, and in the preciousness of His blood. But then after taking that step, we need to be built up.

R.D.P. I wondered if we needed to see that. Sometimes we can be neglectful; we may get a touch in the gospel, but then we may be neglectful. But this would show that it is absolutely vital that we begin to feed immediately and that we continue to feed on that high quality of food.

J.A.B. Do you think that the children of Israel had the Passover every year during the wilderness journey? Do you think they fed on the lamb throughout the wilderness journey? Or did they not have it again until Joshua 5? There is never any reference during the wilderness journey to them partaking of the Passover. The next reference is in Joshua 5 where they had it just before they went in for the conflict in the land. I wondered if we need it all the time?

N.T.M. Would it account for some of the troubles in the wilderness if they did not take the Passover?

J.A.B. Paul speaks of it "For also our passover, Christ, has been sacrificed; so that let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth", (1 Cor 5: 7,8). Do you think Paul is exhorting us to be constantly at this? We need this for our affections.

A.W. If we do not have these things, the flesh and the blood, we will have no life in us. That is very serious.

J.A.B. We can see in the type what happened when the children of Israel got away from this. But more than that, we know from our own experience what happens when we get away from it. We become spiritually listless, with no spiritual energy. There is an interesting Greek word which means energy or power, and Paul uses it quite a lot. For that spiritual energy, we need to be built up constantly in our constitutions.

Rem. It is quickening that brings about vitality and life.

J.A.B. I fear more than anything else my going on in the outward observance of things and not having the enjoyment of these things within. Feeding has life in view. This constitutional side that we are speaking about now, feeding on the death of Jesus, is so that we might have life in the service of God.

Rem. The Ephesians perhaps lost some sense of the quickening power. They left their first love, left the greatest things that they were capacitated for. The conviction of the truth of these things brings vitality.

T.M. I was thinking as to the Passover in the wilderness. If they had gone by the divine way, they would never have needed it. There was only the eleven days' journey, and they had to keep it until the fourteenth day in any case, so they would never have needed it had they gone the divine way.

J.A.B. That is very interesting and perhaps answers my question about whether they had it in the wilderness. If they had been obedient they would not have needed it, but we need it.

B.I. There was nothing casual about the way they ate it. They were in exercise, their loins were girded and they had their sandals on their feet. That would be an exercise for us?

J.A.B. It certainly would be. There is a need to move out, not drawing anything from the world system, and yet having the wherewithal. I was interested in thinking of what this actually meant. We are applying it, of course, and that is where we get the spiritual food from, but it is sometimes interesting just to think of what actually happened on this night. Somewhere around two hundred thousand lambs were taken into these households and killed. There were six hundred thousand footmen, I think it says later on. Without being too imaginative there would be several hundred thousand lambs taken and killed in this passover. The resource that there is in Christ for our nourishment, our building up, is tremendous. And as has been said, they had their sandals on their feet their loins were girded, staves in their hands "and ye shall eat it in haste; it is Jehovah's passover", and then out they went in perfect rank.

D.J.W. Would you say something as to the end of verse 9, "its head with its legs and with its inwards". Some of these things are not what we would normally feed on from a lamb. It is a whole Christ.

You think of His head, every thought was completely in accord with heaven: His legs, his every movement was totally in accord with the Father's will: His inwards, His very emotions and feelings were all perfect. Every aspect of Christ was acceptable to heaven. I think Mr Darby said, He was never more acceptable to the heaven than when He was on the cross.

J.A.B. It is most attractive what you say; I could not add to it.

J.W. The One who was so acceptable in that way, perfect in every way, was undergoing the judgment of God, roast with fire. This is a setting of judgment. Do you think that as we feed on the One who went through the judgment, it would deepen the sense of judgment of sin in ourselves?

J.A.B. It would keep us from much. There is what is constitutional in this, and there is also that which is a preservative. As we appreciate Jesus properly, the other things on which we so often find our natural selves feeding would pale into insignificance, which is where they belong, and Christ become all. There is more than that; as we appreciate the Lord Jesus, we are able to share the Father's appreciation of Him and that would lead to depth and worship and response. That is what God had in mind "let my son go that he may serve me". I feel the need to be delivered from the world and the things in it that sometimes appeal. There is a place for exhortation.

The exhortation "thou shalt not" is needed, especially, may be, in our families. But how much better to have our souls feeding on this blessed One so that these other things lose their appeal; once we have a taste for this food we will be built up in our appreciation of it.

J.W. I was thinking of what has been said about exercise; the more we feed upon Christ, the more we feed upon His sufferings, and the more we feed upon Him, the deeper our exercises will be. Paul says "should we continue in sin ... far be the thought" (see Rom 6: 1,2). It is not just a question of a legal requirement but as feeding on Christ, are we developed in these feelings?

J.A.B. That is fine. So the way in which the manna was given to the people was very interesting; "this is the bread which Jehovah has given you to eat". It is not so much the death of Christ now, but the lowliness of the humanity of Jesus. There was on the face of the wilderness, "something fine, granular, fine as hoar-frost" and they said "What is it?"; they did not recognise it.

M.M. Every one of these matters involves an action on our part. In John 6 we have "he that believes on me". The passover must have

been very testing for the people who actually put the blood on the doorposts and lintels, and here the manna had to be gathered. Can you help us about how we go about these things?

J.A.B. I do not know that I could say very much, but I am glad of what you say, that each way in which we appropriate Christ involves exercise. We do not get this if we are lazy, we do not get it if we are casual about these things. But do you think these exercises will become easier as we deepen in our love for Him, when we realise what a source of blessing He is as we feed on Him? The exercise of gathering, which will always remain an exercise, will then become a joyful one.

J.A.T. So the saints have capacity for this. It is wonderful that even in the carcass of the lion the bees were active. In the presence of death there is the positiveness that comes out of death, as the hymn (No.152) says,

'Out of Thy death has sprung
A wondrous living throng'.

It is what has come out of the death of Christ; He went into death in wondrous grace, but out of it has come the field ripe to harvest.

J.A.B. That is fine, and there is a sweetness in it. It says later on in the chapter that the taste of it was like cake with honey (v 31). It is not sweet to the natural taste, but do you think that as we get a taste for this there is a sweetness that we can find nowhere else?

N.T.M. If there is emphasis on anything, it seems to be on the lowliness of Christ and the smallness of the manna. Did someone not say that if there was any feature that was outstanding in Jesus it was grace. Generally there was an evenness that marked Him. I cannot understand a believer being an abrasive person in the light of a scripture like this.

J.A.B. What you say is a test to me, but I am convinced that it is right. We need to feed on the lowliness of Christ especially for the wilderness pathway. We have to go out to business, and we are surrounded there by the abrasiveness of people carving out success

in this world. The believer has no part of that if he is feeding on the manna. That is a very great test.

N.T.M. Well, we are exhorted to "take heed to your spirit", and "ye know not what spirit ye are". There are plenty of warnings and exhortations and appeals to us. It is something that we need to watch, because it is getting more prevalent in the world, people climbing up on other people's shoulders. There is not consideration for one's fellow. I think it is something that we need to watch ourselves.

J.A.B. I think that is a word for all of us and especially those of us who are younger. The feeding on the manna would be the antidote so that, the amazing lowliness of this blessed One who was the Son of God. Yet in Isaiah it says, "there is no beauty ..., that we should desire him" (chap. 53: 2), there was nothing thereto mark Him out naturally.

D.J.W. Each one gathered according to His eating, so satisfaction was in view. Ambitious people are never satisfied. It is an interesting measure this omer, it is about half a gallon. The believer has some capacity to take in this character of life.

J.A.B. I trust we have, and if we feel that we do not have much capacity, I trust soberly that it might be increased a little today. That is my own exercise. I need more help in this than anyone here. What capacity do I have to absorb the preciousness of the lowliness of Jesus? Do you think there was something important in the way in which a measure of this manna was placed in a pot in the ark? All through the wilderness journey this manna was there before the testimony. Do you think that speaks of the preciousness to God of the lowliness of Jesus?

A.K.T. Does it involve His dependence on the Father? "He openeth mine ear, morning by morning".

J.A.B. Very good. There are so many examples; we can read the gospels and these remarkable typical scriptures and feed on His lowliness. They all increase our apprehension; they all speak of Jesus in a way that is most beautiful and blessed. It is a tremendous

thing to see the whole of the Old Testament being illuminated when we see that it speaks of Jesus, the One whom we love and feed on.

A.K.T. With Paul and his companions, it says "and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them" (Acts 16: 7). Is that the kind of dependent spirit that we should have as feeding on the manna?

J.A.B. Yes, there is not much use talking about this and not being affected by it in our lives. I feel that what has been brought in is a word for all of us that there might be a moral reflection in us of the One on whom we are feeding.

A.W. Does the passover involve a calling together? We come together at the Supper. There should be nothing abrasive there; it should be even and joyful, with the Father looking on us, as well as the Lord Jesus. It is a very blessed occasion.

J.A.B. That is very good. The very regularity of the Supper might dull the impact that the emblems should have on our affections, but I am sure that what you say is right. As we allow ourselves to be affected by these symbols on the table of the body and the blood of Jesus and the way that He has gone, how could we be anything other than affected by it, morally?

R.D.P. I was impressed by this word "behold" - "when the dew that lay round it was gone up, behold, on the face of the wilderness". There is a certain wonderment about that. It was a sight to see. Do you think we need to be maintained in that? All around us is a scene that is trying to make Jesus ordinary. Later they tried to do all kinds of things to the manna to make it more palatable to their flesh. You find in the world that things are said that even twenty, thirty years ago would not have been said about the humanity of Jesus. His acts corrupted in man's mind. Do you think the idea of the distinctiveness and the wonderment of it needs to remain with us? It must literally have been a remarkable sight.

J.A.B. It says in Numbers 11 "the manna was as coriander seed, and its appearance as the appearance of bdellium" (v 7). Bdellium was a precious resin and the manna had that appearance. It was most remarkable that it was spread all around, upon the dew.

Ques. Had you any thought as to why it was actually on the ground?

J.A.B. I do not think I could say much beyond the way in which that speaks of the lowliness of Jesus.

Rem. We have to go low to get it.

J.A.B. We will not have much taste for this if we are thinking a lot of ourselves, will we? We have to be prepared to go down and see the way that Jesus has gone down for us; it is only as going that way that we will appreciate anything of this.

J.A.T. The life of Jesus was just a brief moment, compared with the great length of time. It says His life was taken from the earth (see Acts 8: 33). I was noticing that that comes in after Stephen was martyred and I thought of Stephen's view being heavenward. The manna does not go on, it is eternally before God, but we get on to the old corn of the land. I wondered whether we had to follow the way in which John presents the Lord as in heaven, really here but in heaven. So we can appreciate Him as He was here, but He was not here for long.

J.A.B. That takes us to Joshua. The manna was for the wilderness, but when the ark was laid up in Solomon's day in the temple, the manna was no longer there. There were only the two tables of stone which Moses had placed in it. The manna had been placed there in Exodus and had gone right through the wilderness, and then right through the provisional setting of things under David. But when it came to the final resting place of the ark, the manna was no longer there. I suppose it would be right to say that as we feed on Jesus and His exaltation, on Him where He is now, as Stephen did, we are to that extent beyond the wilderness. Now, for us, of course, it is not a question of chronological order. We never leave the wilderness behind; we will always need the manna until the last day of our sojourn here, and thank God it will always be available to us. But here we have the three things brought together, "held the passover ... they ate of the old corn of the land ... And the manna ceased". It is a wonderful thing.

J.W. The manna is for our daily path, how we begin each day. Do we begin the day with the manna? But when we come to Joshua 5 is it more collective, what we enjoy together?

J.A.B. I am sure that would be right. The children of Israel were going over as an entity under the eye of God. There was much exercise, much land conflict and they needed strength for that, but they had the old corn of the land. It is Christ where He is and we in association with Him and feeding on Him there. It is a very blessed thing; we touch a little of it.

D.E.R. We need Christ for our circumstances here, which the manna speaks of, but how much greater is it to be in His circumstances to enjoy Him in His own realm.

J.A.B. That is fine.

M.B. Can you help us practically as to how we feed on Christ where He is?

J.A.B. I believe that we have some experience of that at the Supper. We are reminded of the way He has been here; there is the side of the memorial of His death. But then He comes to us from that exalted position and our hearts are uplifted in response and praise to Him. I think what has been said is important; it is something that we appreciate as we are together. It may be that we can even appreciate it in some measure as we are together today as feeding on Him where He is in glory. The staves are drawn out, the ark at rest after all that journey, Stephen saw it, the glory of God and Jesus.

M.B. It is relatively easy to consider the Lamb and the manna because we have the scriptures, but we do not have the same kind of thing in relation to Christ where He is.

J.A.B. I wondered if Ephesians would give us a little of that. We are raised and we are seated with Him. It is something of which perhaps we only get a glimpse. I feel that for myself. That is why we have spent most of our time speaking about these individual aspects of feeding on Jesus. But I believe that this one is just as important.

R.D.P. They had gone to the land; they did not eat it in the wilderness. They may have known about it perhaps, but they did not eat it there, they literally were in the land before they ate it. Is that not important? It bears on the collective. It is not envisaged in this scripture that we eat alone, but they ate it. It was one thing and they ate it together. The manna to some extent may have been gathered at slightly different times, but this they ate together. It was one crop.

D.B.B. At the Supper we often get an impression which we cannot exactly put into words, it is beyond that. Would that not be something of this glory?

J.A.B. I am sure that is right. We must have the individual appreciation of Jesus to know anything about the old corn of the land. If we do not appreciate Him as the manna, or as the passover lamb roast with fire, the old corn of the land will not mean anything to us. But as we do feed on Him and as we come together at the Supper with our hearts and affections focused on Him, do you think we get a glimpse of Him in His glory?

J.W. This book is opening up our heavenly privileges, our association with Christ where He is. We touch it after the emblems, Christ as He is. If we have any living contact with Christ, it is with Christ as He is, not Christ as He was. We can enjoy that together?

J.A.B. We can and should be affected by remembering Him as He was, but as we are in living contact with Him, it is with Him where He is now. That is as a glorified Man.

M.M. Are we dependent on the service of the Holy Spirit in regard of this? I was thinking of "we all, looking on the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor 3: 18). Is that how we are able to feed on Him as we are transported in the power of the Spirit, to know something of the area where He is?

J.A.B. I am sure that is right. And it is an upward progression, from glory to glory, that is an upward way of appreciation of Him.

D.E.R. Immediately prior to their feeding on the old corn of the land, was the exercises of Gilgal, circumcision.

J.A.B. There is a moral order in all of this which is very important.

P.H. I was thinking of what has been said as to the Spirit. There is an interesting note of Mr. Darby's which says 'The Spirit which is in Christ dwells in us and is the living power of the new life'. That is the appropriation of Christ.

J.A.B. That is a good note to end on. That is how we appreciate Him where He is. The Spirit as dwelling in us brings these things to us and links us with the Man in glory, and we can feed on Him on Him there. It is a very wonderful thing. We have to pass through the wilderness day by day and we need the manna every morning, we need to feed on the lamb roast with fire. Yet we can feed on Him in glory too. What a wonderful divine system!

BIRMINGHAM

13 November 1993

Key to initials

(Local if not otherwise indicated)

M.Bedford; D.B.Bodman; J.A.Brown, Grangemouth; P.Herbert, Newport; B.Ikin, Manchester; M.Matthews; N.T.Meek, Malvern; T.Moulden, Worcester; R.D.Plant; D.E.Remmington, St.Albans; A.K.Turner, Rotherham; J.A.Turner, Chippenham; D.J.Willetts; A.Wilson, Manchester; J.Wright, Redbridge

THE GLORY OF JESUS

John Brown

John 1: 14,18,29; Isaiah 53: 2-8,10,11; John 10: 17,18; Exodus 16: 10,12

I would like, with the Spirit's help, to say a little more about the glory of Jesus. It is something that has been before me this week; we sang on Lord's day morning the line of a hymn which affected me very much:

'The lustre of His love in death
Shone forth in glory rare.' (Hymn 374)

I wondered about that. How could the glory of God be seen in the death of Jesus? We were speaking in the reading of how there are things that do not make sense to the natural mind, and that is one of them. As far as the public testimony was concerned, what was there of glory in the death of Jesus? It was a scene of outward humiliation and shame and darkness, and yet the hymn writer could say:

'The lustre of His love in death
Shone forth in glory rare.'

What has impressed me is the way in which the glory of God was seen in our Lord Jesus; a lowly, subject man, and yet glory was seen there, moral glory. Mr Raven says that glory is a moral thought. We all have different ideas of it and sometimes when we are younger we might think of glory as involving a blaze of light, the sort of thing that Paul was affected by on the road to Damascus when he saw "a light above the brightness of the sun" (Acts 26: 13). He was certainly

affected by the glory of the Lord Jesus then. But the glory of God was seen when Jesus was here; the moral glory of that perfect One about whom we were speaking in the reading. We read about Him here, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an onlybegotten with a father, full of grace and truth". What glory was His! John pointed to Him in verse 29, "he sees Jesus coming to him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God". Is there anything in the Lord Jesus that attracts you, dear friend? What is it about Jesus that attracts you? How often He is presented in type, and in the book of Revelation too, as the Lamb of God. What an attractive thought that is, but do you see the moral glory of Jesus as He was here as the Lamb of God? There is a book, *The Moral Glories of our Lord Jesus Christ*. I was given good advice by a brother this week; he told me to read it after the weekend and not before!

It is this then that I have in my heart to speak about, the moral glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and how we see it in Him. We see it in the Man of the gospels. What a tremendous thing it is to get glimpses of that glory that shone 'through the human veil' as the hymn says. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" - the apostle John could say "and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father". What did he mean by that? For three and a half years he had walked as a disciple with Jesus, in a scene of contrariety. There had been very few examples of the official glory of Jesus, nor even glimpses of it. I suppose when he entered Jerusalem and they strewed the palm branches and said "Hosanna to the son of David", there was a glimpse of the official glory of Jesus. But what a wonderful thing it is to be occupied with the varied glories of Jesus. How many there are. There are His official glories, the glories He has as Son of David, as Son of God, and soon the whole universe will be irradiated with the glory of Jesus. But for now He is still a rejected Man, and in this world there is no appreciation of the glory of Jesus. But there is such an appreciation, I trust, in the hearts of everyone here. My exercise is that in my heart at least there might be a fuller apprehension of the

glory of God as it was here in a lowly, humble Man - "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world".

First of all we have to be interested. These men were interested. Later in the chapter they come to Him and say "Rabbi, where abidest thou? He says to them, Come and see" (vv 38,39).

Are you interested in the glory of Jesus or is it to you just doctrine that brethren talk about in the meetings? Does it mean something to you? In your personal link with Jesus, which you no doubt have, do you see in Him the blessed One in whom the glory of God shines out and shone out while He was here. These persons were interested - "where abidest thou? He says to them, Come and see. They went therefore, and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day". Where did Jesus abide? Well, I suppose they went and saw where He was living, but it speaks too in verse 18 of "the onlybegotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father". That is where He abode! What a wonderful thing it is that these persons were interested, and He said "Come and see" and they went and saw where He abode.

So He went on in this pathway of outward lowliness and meekness, and yet as each one of us who loves Him has no doubt realised, the four gospels are full of references to Him in His glory. It is not immediately apparent, but as we think about the way He went, each touch of His mercy to a sin-stricken person, each miracle that He performed, the glory of God was there. Think of who was there, the Son of God, and yet He went on in that pathway of lowliness. On the mount of transfiguration He was there in the glory, and there were those who saw Him. The voice out of the cloud said "This is my beloved Son in whom I have found my delight; hear him" (Matt 17: 4). Think of the acclamation of the Father coming out upon that blessed One. But He went onwards on that lowly suffering pathway, on to Gethsemane. What darker point could there be, apart from the cross itself, than that night when He was delivered up. And yet, even there in the garden, His glory shone. The band came to take Him and He said, "I am He" and they went away backward and fell to the ground (see John 18: 5,6). The glory of Jesus was there despite

the fact that He would submit Himself to them, despite the fact that He would allow Himself to be taken by wicked hands. The glory of God was there shining out in Him, "I am He". Then He went on to the cross.

We have read about that from Isaiah 53. How affecting a scripture it is. I trust there is not a heart here who has become so used to these precious words that they remain unaffected by the presentation of the sufferings of Jesus. He went on to the cross. How did the glory of God shine out at the cross? What is glory? Let us remember what Mr Raven said, Glory is the conciliation of God's nature, which is love, and His attributes. All of these things that God is, mercy, grace, holiness, truth, righteousness, all of these things taken together with His nature, love; that is the glory of God. How were these things seen at the cross? Jesus was there as rejected, crucified as a common criminal, hung there between two thieves, spat upon, despised. How was the glory of God seen there? Mr Stoney says that the lowest point became the brightest point. He says that at that very, blackest, most terrible spot was the very spot where the rays of divine glory shone brightest, just at that point. Let us be affected by the way in which the glory shone out at the death of Jesus. The sufferings, the humiliation, all of that was certainly there, but then think of how God's glory shone in the yielding up of His precious Son to suffering and to death. Think of how God's love was exemplified on the cross. It required the cross, it required the death of Jesus for God's love to be manifested - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal" (John 3: 16), and that needed the suffering and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then God's righteousness could be satisfied only by a sacrifice for sin and only one Sacrifice would do, the precious sinless One. If God had been only a God of love, what would have happened to sin? Many people would have God to be only a God of love. They say, if God is a God of love then we will be all right, God will forgive us, It does not matter what we do, because God is a God of love. God is not only a God of love, He is also a God of

righteousness. But if He was a God of righteousness only where would we be? Because God in His righteousness could have done nothing else but cut us off in the judgment that we deserve. But in the cross, let us just see it again, these things were all brought together in the death of Jesus, God's love, His righteousness, His mercy, as the hymn says -

'See mercy, mercy from on high
Descend to rebels doomed to die.' (Hymn 366)

All these things were brought together. How mercy gloried over judgment! That is an example of how the glory of God shone out at the cross, "Mercy glories over judgment". We had that in our meeting on Tuesday evening; we had a word on glory and then we had a word on mercy, and I wondered what the connection was between the two things.

Then I thought of what James says, "Mercy glories over judgment" (chap 2: 13). I believe that the cross of Jesus was the supreme example of mercy, God's mercy, glorying over judgment and yet the judgment had to fall, and it fell on Jesus, the only one who did not deserve it. We deserve it, but it fell on Him. What glory was there. All these things were seen in the cross.

You might wonder how was majesty seen at the cross? That is why I read in John 10. Majesty is an attribute of God. God is a majestic God, a sinhating God, a righteous God, a holy God, He is a God of majesty. How was the majesty of God seen in the death of Jesus? I wondered if it would be seen in this verse "I lay down my life that I may take it again" (John 10: 17). Men thought that they were putting Him to death, that they were getting rid of Him, but Jesus was going there under His own control. We can say very reverently, He had the whole situation under His hand. "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again" (v 18). What glory was there. Men did not see it, and yet there was one man who saw it.

Remember the centurion, what he said, "In very deed this man was just" (Luke 23: 47). The centurion glorified God. There was a man

who saw through the humiliation, who saw through the weakness, and he saw the glory of God and he glorified God - "in very deed this man was just". What a wonderful thing it is that we can see the glory of God, the lustre of His love in death, shining forth in glory. I can only speak of these things feebly and haltingly, but I trust that what I am saying does interest you in the way in which the glory of God, and what that involved, all His love and His attributes brought together and shone forth at that time.

So Jesus went through death and He was raised from the dead. What glory there was in the resurrection. The angels were there and testified to the fact that the tomb was empty. We sang that in our hymn just now:

'We love to look within the tomb
Robbed by Thy death of all its gloom
The stone forever rolled away
Thy death the power of death did slay.' (Hymn 216)

What glory there was in the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith. Never forget that. What happened there, the glory of God seen in resurrection, is the foundation of everything else that we believe in. You may wonder how you can understand some of these things that we have been speaking of, but, dear friend, hold on to the resurrection of Jesus. The glory of God was there and Christ's own glory, for in another setting He took His life again and He rose from the dead. What a glorious moment that was! Because of that, and because of the place into which He is ascended, we can enjoy all that we are enjoying today, all that we have as surety for the soul. All of these wonderful things are based on the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

These things are intended to affect us. I thought of Stephen as an example of this. We did not read about it, but Stephen was in a very difficult situation in Acts 6. Yet as being reproached it says "And all who sat in the council, looking fixedly on him, saw his face as the face of an angel" (v 15). I think there was some reflection of the glory of God in Stephen's face. Then he went on to persecution

and death and "having fixed his eye on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God". He too was able to take on the characteristics of His master. He could say "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And having said this, he fell asleep".

I feel for myself the need to be affected morally by the glory of God as it shone out in the life and death of Jesus. Of course it shines out now in the place where He is, and we need to feed on Him there. We had that at the end of our reading and I was glad of what came in about it, feeding on the old corn of the land, feeding on Him in glory. We have to move through this world, and as we were reminded, we have to be morally conformed to Him. The only way we can do that is as feeding on Him. But we need to get a touch of His glory in our souls.

That is why I read in Exodus. It may seem a strange passage to read in view of what we have been speaking about today. The people had murmured, but God was gracious to them in their murmuring. There was a time later on when they murmured again about the manna and God was not gracious to them. But at this time He was gracious to them, He even gave them flesh to eat. Think of the grace of God. There was a time, in Numbers, when they lusted for flesh and the plague slew them even as the flesh was between their teeth. But here, at the beginning of the wilderness journey, God was gracious to them. It says "And it came to pass, when Aaron spoke to the whole assembly of the children of Israel, that they turned toward the wilderness". What I have in my heart is the fact that we can see the glory of God, even though we are still in wilderness conditions. Soon we will be with Jesus and we will see Him as He is, face to face and then the glory will shine without a veil, we will see Him as He is. What a prospect that is for each one of our souls! I trust that we are all waiting for that time. But now we are in wilderness conditions and things are not easy. The enemy brings in failure, there is pressure on the hearts of the brethren, illness and weakness in various places, sorrow and bereavement, and of course that will be the case until the end of our pathway here. But Aaron spoke to the whole assembly so that they turned towards the

wilderness and "behold, the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud". The glory of Jehovah was to be with them all the way through the wilderness, the pillar of fire by night, the pillar of cloud by day, and it was the glory of Jehovah that appeared in the cloud. Sometimes it may be that things seem difficult. we may find it difficult to go on, wondering where to go, how to proceed. What a thing it is to get a glimpse of the glory of God appearing! We can see that glory as we think of Jesus as He was here, and where He is now.

May we all be affected by the glory of Jesus. Oh, may it not just be something that we can speak about! I feel for myself the need to be morally affected by the glory of Jesus, the moral glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because as we are affected by it, we shall deepen in our appreciation of Him and our praise in response to God will be deeper and fuller and richer. That is what God takes pleasure in, and in it He is glorified. May we all be encouraged along these lines, for His Name's sake.

BIRMINGHAM

13 November 1993