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Contents

DIVINE SPEAKING

OUR ANSWER TO DIVINE SPEAKING

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Genesis 8: 20-22; 2 Peter 1: 16-21; John 18: 37 (last sentence); 6: 23; Psalm 27: 4; 99: 5-9

J.A.B. My exercise for these meetings today is to be occupied with divine speaking and its continuity from the beginning of things in Genesis until the present time. When I was younger, I used to think of how God spoke directly to persons in the old dispensation: it all seemed very clear, and I can remember wondering, why does God not speak like that now? Perhaps we could enquire together into how He is still speaking, and the continuity of divine speaking in this dispensation. Then later on, we may get help about how we are to answer to divine speaking in moral exercise and the progress that there is to be.

So God has spoken; in the beginning of things He spoke in creation, He spoke when Jesus came in: "This is my beloved Son", and He is still speaking. I wondered if we might see the current character of divine speaking. The Lord Jesus gives us something of that when He says, "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life". He speaks of the way in which the flesh profits nothing, but rather "It is the Spirit which quickens". Then we might see the peculiarly precious character of divine speaking in temple conditions, even in the days of breakdown in which we are. The Psalms might speak of that. Do you think we might help each other to see that God is still speaking to us, just as much as He did in the old dispensation, and to see what characterises that speaking?

J.N.M. There is no question as to God speaking; the question is my hearing. I wondered why you read Genesis 8. Its structure is quite clear: "And Jehovah smelled the sweet odour. And Jehovah said". What do you say about that?

J.A.B. I thought that Genesis 8 brings out what I believe are two principal features of divine speaking: it is always in love, and if it is heard properly, it will always test the conscience. Noone had told

Noah to do this: he built an altar and took these animals and offered them up. He did that according to his spiritual intuition. God looked on what Noah had done; He was pleased with it, so it says, "And Jehovah said in his heart ... ". I thought that was a very precious touch. I linked it in my mind with the Father's voice as Jesus came up from the waters of baptism: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. I wondered if what the Father said then proceeded from His heart, His affections. So we get God's love for His creature: "I will no more henceforth curse the ground ..." but then the touch to our consciences, "for the thought of Man's heart is evil from his youth". That is as true now as it was then. Do you think that God's love and His appeal to the conscience would always mark divine speaking?

J.N.M. I am sure that is so. Do you think Noah was occupied with Christ, typically, in His many features. I never noticed until today, "and took of every clean animal, and of all clean fowl". In Leviticus 1 there are certain gradations, but he seemed to cover all that was available to him, and so he was privileged to hear the voice of God.

J.A.B. That is fine. I am glad of your impressions about that - "of every clean animal, and of all clean fowl". Jehovah looked down on this scene and saw Christ typified there, did He not? Do you think He loves still to speak to us about the glory and preciousness to Him of His beloved Son?

J.N.M. And the other side is what it means to Him if, even in simplicity and smallness, anyone of us draws near to Him and speaks to Him about Jesus. Then He will have something to say to us from His heart.

M.G.W. It is very affecting that, as you remarked, "Jehovah said in his heart"? Could we say reverently that God was profoundly affected inwardly by this presentation which typified the fragrance of Christ? Moses wrote this: God must have confided to him what He had said, not out loud, but just in His own heart. Is that not the same as His salutation of the Lord Jesus at the Jordan and on the mount? It was "such a voice"; the feelings of God were brought out

in these expressions. Therefore, all the more need for us to hear what He said.

J.A.B. That is very fine. I did wonder how Moses had known what God had said in His heart. It does not say that Noah heard Him say this, but I wondered if it would bring in the need for sensitivity on our part. The scripture that I have mainly in mind is the one in Peter.

Peter had to be adjusted, and he was adjusted; the writing of his epistle shows that. But I thought that this is a wonderful scene, involving all that this fragrance speaks of, "the sweet odour" or, as the note says, the 'odour of rest'. God was so pleased with it that He promised never to curse the ground again.

J.C.G. This is in the context of a cleansed earth, is it not?

Previously there had been dark and difficult conditions, God almost giving up man, but Noah "walked with God", Gen 6: 9. There was some basis for the communication and manner of life that Noah had. Did that prepare Noah for the presentation of this wonderful offering to God, bringing in the establishment of the covenant?

J.A.B. I should be glad if you would say more about what there was in Noah that enabled him to receive these divine communications.

J.C.G. We could apply it to those who go on in faithfulness with God. But firstly it is an indication of what God found in Christ, and evidently that is your point in Peter. In the dark conditions into which the Lord came, He was a bright and shining light for God; this communication provided something of joy and delight to the heart of God, did it not?

J.A.B. Yes, it is very interesting to think of these divine communications. Do you think that, in their essence, divine communication, as it comes, is answered to as there are these features of which you have spoken and which are shown in Noah? It is not exactly a one-way matter, is it? There is a response. I wondered if what Noah did here was like a response to what God had done for him. He had this impression, he was led to do this in the sensitivity of his links with God. I feel for myself the need for

sensitivity in hearing and understanding divine communications.

How often it comes into the New Testament "He that has an ear, let him hear", just what you said earlier as to hearing what God is saying at any time. How important it is!

J.N.M. Noah had had over a year in the ark with these animals. Do you think that, as he was occupied with them, he would learn in that year why God called some clean and some unclean?

J.A.B. Yes, I am sure that is right. He was developing in his understanding of what God had in mind and why there were more of some animals than of others.

J.N.M. We need to grasp in our own souls the things that God approves. It is not that you do not know the other kind of things; you weigh it over and find it in your own heart because the flesh is still there. There is flesh and spirit, and you look at them both and then you say, I can see after this period of exercise why God approves of one and disapproves of the other, and then you throw your weight on the side of the things that God approves of.

J.A.B. That is good; that gives God a basis for saying in His heart, "I will no more henceforth curse the ground", does it?

J.N.M. Is it going too far to say that God saw Christ in Noah at this point?

J.A.B. Noah may be a type of Christ. I linked it very much with the Lord Jesus coming up out of the Jordan. It was not exactly a cleansed earth there because that is yet to happen literally. But think of the pleasure that God had in Jesus as coming up out of the Jordan, and the Holy Spirit descending bodily as a dove upon Him.

The Father's voice has been called an exclamation - "This is my beloved Son". I felt that it showed us all the affections of the Father being released towards this blessed One. We get something of that here, do we not?

J.N.M. In the godly remnant with Jesus at the Jordan, there was something of the cleansed earth, was there not? It may only have been small in scope, but it was something that God loved.

J.A.B. Yes, and it was an area of things in which He could speak.

J.Sp. Noah's name, I understand, means 'comfort': "This one shall comfort us concerning our work and concerning the toil of our hands", Gen 5: 29. Do you think the point is not that God is now looking towards man; He is looking towards Christ and He is going to work in relation to Him. The great thought is fructifying and fruitfulness: the earth is going to produce fruit according to the Man of His choice.

J.A.B. I could not add to that. It is very fine to think of all that God has in His beloved Son and in those who have been made like Him.

We sometimes think of the complacency that existed between the Father and the Son when Jesus was here on earth. Do you think it is there that divine communications can flow freely? Of course, God can speak governmentally and in judgment. It may be that some of us have heard His voice in that way, maybe while doing something that we should not have done, and something comes in.

God can stop us, and His voice can come to us in direct power. But more often it is known in this complacency in communion which is there between the Father and the Son.

J.Sp. It is as if God has a point of reference now and all His operations are directed towards that point of reference. So there is to be a seed-time "seed-time and harvest". The earth is going to bear fruit according to the Man of God's choice.

J.A.B. We could turn to Peter and see how it works out. We know what Peter did in Matthew 17 on the mountain. He thought that it would be right to have three tabernacles, and the same voice came as had come from heaven in chapter 3, when the Lord came up out of the Jordan, but there were added these words: "Hear him". I was interested that Peter does not repeat that in his epistle. He simply says, "Such as voice being uttered to him by the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight". Peter had got the benefit of the exercise. He does not record the words, "Hear him". God had said that to him, but I wondered if Peter had got the benefit of what he had heard on the holy mountain.

R.S.R. He knows what he is saying here. In Mark 9 verse 6 it says "For he knew not what he should say", but his language here is excellent for a fisherman with little education. Attention has been called to the ability to express things so superlatively, as we have in this passage.

J.A.B. Very good. I always think Peter is a very encouraging example. I know he is special as one of the Lord's disciples and apostles, but it is encouraging to see in the early Acts the way in which he was recovered so quickly. Just a few weeks after denying his Lord, he was standing up, preaching in all the power that the Holy Spirit gave him. So here, as you say, his words were excellent words, and he conveys an impression of this voice, "such a voice". How do we get this impression that Peter had, "such a voice"? He heard it there on that holy mountain, but can we hear this voice too?

R.S.R. Scripture speaks of "the knowledge which cometh of reflection", Prov 8: 12. You find that with Peter. He was not up to the position on the mountain, but he is as he writes his epistle. In retrospect he has this wonderful impression.

J.A.B. It is very interesting: "For he received from God the Father honour and glory". This would be a test as to whether the Lord Jesus is the object of our attention and our admiration.

G.B.G. It is impressive to think of the Father as supreme in the economy and He is drawing attention to Christ. Three times in the gospels you get the Father's voice; each time it is in relation to Christ: That is for our benefit, is it not?

J.A.B. I was impressed that the Father's voice is always drawing attention to this blessed One. He draws us to Him. Does the Lord Jesus not say that, "No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him", John 6: 4? How would the Father draw us? He would draw us now by speaking to our hearts of the glory and greatness of this blessed One.

G.C.McK. That would help us as to your thought as to the divine speaking continuing. Christ is still the delight of heaven, of the Father. He is looking for the saints in each generation to come into

an appreciation of Him. So divine speaking must continue in this kind of way, do you think?

J.A.B. I thought that. God has in mind that we might enter into an understanding of it. I was impressed by the note, 'such a voice being uttered to him by the excellent glory'. The note to "uttered" says 'It is ... the Greek word ... from which the word translated "impetuous" in Acts 2 verse 2 is derived'. It refers to the rushing power of the in-breathing of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 at Pentecost. It is that character of speaking that came to Peter on the holy mountain. And then it says in verse 21, "but holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Spirit" and the note there says "'under the power of" is the same Greek root as "uttered"'. So that this speaking has the character that it had at the beginning of the dispensation and while we cannot say much as to power in testimony, what a privilege it is to know something of these divine utterances, still coming in that living character.

M.G.W. Would you say that during times of privilege, when we touch in our spirits what it is to gaze on the glory of the Lord and in the presence of the Father, we might be concerned too as to what we say in a situation like that. Should we rather be on the alert to hear what the Father would say in such a situation?

J.A.B. That is my exercise, that whatever I may be thinking of does not interfere with this speaking. It did with Peter on the mountain.

His thought was to make three tabernacles and that interfered for the moment with God's mind. But then the word still comes in all its grace, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight".

God could have said to Peter, 'This is my beloved Son ... hear him', but He calls attention to Him in grace, "in whom I have found my delight". He is still doing that, is He not?

M.G.W. I am wondering whether in my concern to know what to say in thanksgiving, and surely we do need to be exercised about that, I might be missing something which the Father is saying through some other thanksgiving or a touch in a hymn. I might miss it

through being too preoccupied with what I would hope to say in thanksgiving.

A.McK. Why does it say, "by the excellent glory"?

J.A.B. I do not know. I should like your help on that.

A.McK. I think it visualises a sphere that is in accord with the Father's delight; persons there would be priestly in character and they would discern that. But I would like help on it.

J.A.B. That is very interesting. You mean that is where the divine speaking comes from.

A.McK. I think so. We could hardly speak of being in heaven, but we could speak about what is wholly in accord with heaven. That is the glory of divine Persons.

J.A.B. Yes. I do not want to go through the verses we have read in John in sequence but to take them along with this one. I did wonder if we would see that from what the Lord says in John. Clearly it was in His mind that if anyone is not in accord with the truth, for example, they are not going to hear His voice. Is that right?

A.McK. Yes, when Aaron went in he had garments of glory and beauty. If we enter into this area, it is only as we are in accord with it and our minds would need to be controlled. Aaron had on the diadem, "Holiness to Jehovah!", Exod 39: 30.

J.A.B. I greatly feel the need for that for myself, our minds being under the control of the Spirit. In thinking of the scriptures we have read, I find that verse in John 6 very testing, "It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing: the words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life". If we take these three things together, as we must do to get the context, we can see the need to have things under control and make way for the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, and then we will find that the Lord's words are spirit and life. But if we allow anything at all of the flesh, our ears will be deadened to the life-giving words of Jesus.

G.C.McK. Man is excluded by Peter: "for prophecy was not ever uttered by the will of man". Would that be a test of anything we say,

that we ourselves should be, as you say, in accord with the truth and that our own wills should not enter into it, but rather that we might make way for divine speaking?

J.A.B. I think that. I feel very tested by it: no doubt we all do. But I also feel that it is for our encouragement that God has made provision for the maintenance of an area where His speaking can be known. We will come later, I trust, to the thought of the temple, but in the meantime we are considering what can come from God if we are under the control of the Spirit individually or collectively. There must be a state that is in accord with what we are speaking about now as to "the excellent glory". Sometimes during exercises I have had, perhaps when I have been in a wrong state, I have thought, Why does God not make His mind clear? Why does the Lord's voice not come to us? But I think what we are saying now is the answer to that.

J.C.G. In His pathway here the Lord Jesus was always at pains to make it clear that what He said He received and delivered faithfully from the Father. But in John 7 verse 18 He makes a general statement, "He that speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but he that seeks the glory of him that has sent him, he is true, and unrighteousness is not in him". That would bear in a general sense on us as well, would it not? He fulfilled that perfectly. But it is a challenge to us as to how we act ourselves, is it not?

J.A.B. Yes, it is. I think that relates to what I thought as to John 18 verse 37. "Every one that is of the truth hears my voice". Does that link with what you have said?

J.C.G. Yes, it does, and the Lord is the perfect model. But I was thinking of what was said earlier as to the intrusion of the flesh and the will of the first man which has no place among the saints of the assembly. We do not really receive the mind of God if the mind of man intrudes. Is that important?

J.A.B. Yes, it is very important. I think that verse to which you have referred in John 7 is encouraging: "But he that seeks the glory of him that has sent him, he is true, and unrighteousness is not in him", (v

18). We really need the Spirit of truth for this, do we not? He is called that in John 15, "the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you ..." (v 13). We need to be maintained in the setting where the truth is known and, as being there rightly, it is not taking high ground to say that we will hear the Lord's voice.

M.G.W. Do you think Pilate illustrates the very thing that you are saying? He was a man not according to the truth: he is baffled by it. This was something he had never dealt in. Political compromise, give and take, political manoeuvre and all that was his home-ground, but truth, what was that? Here he is, enquiring about the Person of Jesus. He will never get it, and neither will we, if we are not according to the truth. Does he not underline what you have been saying?

J.A.B. Yes: he is a very sad example of someone who was so close to this blessed One and yet so far away morally, "What is truth?" I feel the test of this: "Every one that is of the truth hears my voice".

We might say that we would love to hear the Lord's voice about an exercise or in relation to a question, or even generally. Well, here He is saying that we will hear it: "Every one that is of the truth hears my voice".

J.N.M. And that is characteristic of the truth. I was thinking of young persons who might be sitting here today saying, Well, I would love to have that but I sometimes stumble; I suppose I am disqualified and I cannot hear the Lord's voice. But that is not what it means, is it?

J.A.B. I think that is important. It is "of the truth". Which of us has not stumbled? I can say that I have heard the Lord's voice when I have stumbled! We had in our reading a reference to the man who falls seven times.

J.Sp. "For the righteous falleth seven times, and riseth up again", Prov 24: 16. There is something of God that responds to the promptings of conscience, able to lift himself up with divine help. I thought that was encouraging at the time.

J.A.B. Do you think that would bear on what you have said? We all often stumble, and some of us fall down pretty badly, but then "of the truth" is characteristic. Could you say more about it, please?

J.N.M. I think it is a side of the truth, especially when we are young, we need to realise. There are "wisdom's children". Scripture speaks like that. That does not mean that every utterance that these people made was wise, but they were characteristically like that, I suppose because they had seen the majesty of Christ. The fact that they may sometimes not have known the answer or sometimes may have said a silly or a wrong thing did not change what they were characteristically. They were wisdom's children and heaven looked at them like that.

J.A.B. Do you think Peter would be an example of that? He was affected by this experience. Do you think if we get our eyes filled and our hearts filled with the glory and beauty of the Lord Jesus, even if we take our eyes off Him, if we stumble, we can be recovered, as we have had Him in our hearts? Peter was to bear testimony to the "excellent glory".

J.N.M. I suppose if we went over the things that the disciples said in the gospels, we would find most of them were very unwise, but the Lord used them, did He not? For example, Philip says, "Lord, shew us the Father and it suffices us", John 14: 8. But the Lord replies, "He that has seen me has seen the Father", (v 9).

J.A.B. Divine speaking is always in love.

H.T. I appreciate very much your thoughts as to divine speaking. The very fact that God speaks to a creature is very elevating. I was thinking of the level at which the Father speaks, but then there is the Lord speaking and the Spirit speaking. The Father is speaking at the level of those to whom Christ is to be made known. It is a very elevating thing for our souls.

J.A.B. I wondered if the passage in 2 Peter would bear that out, the elevation from which this speaking comes. Peter uses superlative language in these epistles. He speaks of "the excellent glory". For a man who had denied the Lord Jesus, his Master, what a wonderful

example he is of someone who has been brought up again to the level at which God would have him in appreciation of His beloved Son. Then this speaking, as you have said, is on the same level. These words of the Lord Jesus in chapters 18 and 6 are very testing: "It is the Spirit which quickens." We have the Spirit of truth indwelling us so that we might be maintained at this level.

H.T. I think it is helpful to see the level at which this speaking takes place. The Lord Himself is speaking to those who are brought into a knowledge of the divine economy, and of the operations in grace and love of that economy.

J.A.B. Yes, it takes our minds to Hebrews "at the end of these days has spoken to us in the person of the Son", (Heb 1: 2), or "in ... Son", as the scripture is. It is a very fine thought, is it not? There has been all the past speaking to the fathers and the prophets, but then "at the end of these days"; it is like the climax of things. But the grace of the dispensation is that that character of speaking is still continuing.

R.S.R. We have both the positive and the negative together in this passage in John 6. "It is the Spirit which quickens" is the positive; "the flesh profits nothing" is the negative. It takes us a long time to arrive at that truth, do you not think?

J.A.B. I know that. I was very tested but very interested in the way that the Lord brings these three sentences together. "It is the Spirit which quickens"; we would all recognise that, we cannot know life outside of the Holy Spirit. But then, "the flesh profits nothing". How often I have had to recognise that in my experience, that what I am has interfered with what God would say to me or what He might indicate. It is not so much what I have done although that is terrible enough, but what I am - "the flesh profits nothing". Is that a lesson that we are constantly learning?

R.S.R. Yes, I would say so. The exercise is to rely on the Spirit in order that quickening might take place, and, if that takes place, the flesh would recede, must recede.

J.A.B. I trust so. "The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life". I trust that there is no-one here who has not had some impression of the Lord's words being to them spirit and life. It is a wonderful experience.

A.McK. When the Lord spoke to Peter in Matthew 16, he says "*Thou*" - and the "*thou*" is in italics - "*Thou*" are Peter". If Peter failed, he would always come back to that. He would always be Peter.

J.A.B. You mean what there was characteristically there according to the work of God?

A.McK. Yes, and it is related to the assembly, is it not? So when he comes on to where you read in his epistle, he would be grounded in that.

M.G.W. Is that what was at the back of Peter's mind? He says, I am just about to die. Now, these are glorious impressions. But because it is now a dark day and there are no apostles, is all this lost? No! The splendour of all this is still with the saints. Is the divine speaking going to stop? Certainly not! Do you think Peter is saying, I want you to think about these things after I am gone. Is that not the enormous encouragement of the day in which we are? Divine speaking will continue: if I am sensitive enough to hear it?

J.A.B. So we must put ourselves in subjection to the Speaker; "has spoken to us in ... the Son". Reference has been made to the 'superiority of the Speaker' in relation to that verse. If we are not in subjection to Him, we will not hear His voice, but as we put ourselves in subjection to the great Speaker, we will hear His voice.

A.M. It is very interesting that your verse in John 6 comes in at the end of a chapter that is full of divine teaching. It leads to a spiritual constitution that would be listening for the Lord's voice. I was thinking of Exodus 33 earlier on; when Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, it says, "every one who sought Jehovah" (v 7). That relates to what you are saying. In persons who desire to hear the Lord's voice, certain moral features are necessary, do you think?

J.A.B. That is exactly what I was seeking help about, that it is the formation of these moral features that leads to the Lord being free to speak and where His voice can be heard. So often our spiritual histories are cluttered up with other things. We all know that to our cost. But I think what you have said as to the whole context of John 6 being feeding on Christ would give us the constitution for what we are speaking about. It is very important.

Now perhaps we could get some help about what we mean when we talk about the temple in operation. I have used these Old Testament references in the Psalms, but we know well the references in the New Testament to the temple. I thought this was a beautiful verse in Psalm 27, "One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after" - he is referring to the things we have been speaking about - "that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, ... ", but not only that, "and to enquire of him in his temple". I believe that we need to hold precious the character of a reading meeting like this and value it rightly, value the way in which divine light can shine in, as we speak together over the scriptures.

R.S.R. Do you think we fail by not following things up? "One thing have I asked of Jehovah", then he says, "that will I seek after". How many good impressions we have had and we do not follow them up to a conclusion!

J.A.B. That is a very practical word to us all, especially to those of us who do not have as much time as we would like for following things through. I am sure that is a very important exhortation to all of us.

J.N.M. A brother sent me a short article and its heading was, 'To the Soul'. It was three pages, on Monday's soliloquies. What do you say to that?

J.A.B. You had better say what you thought of it.

J.N.M. It was just his working out of what had impressed him on Lord's Day, following what our brother said.

J.A.B. So we are to keep on thinking about the impressions we receive.

J.N.M. Well, he did, evidently.

J.A.B. It is a practical word for us all. The pressures of business and other pressures on our minds and spirits during the week sometimes drive this away. You have had experience of that too, I know, but it is a wonderful thing to prove the quickening power of the Spirit in relation to these exercises too.

J.N.M. 'By these things men live', does Job say that? We may drop the impressions of Lord's Day and get the Monday-morning feeling, but then you can carry something through.

J.A.G. It gets back to what was said as to John 6 - our feeding on Christ? It is something that is constant. We sang in the hymn:

And by the daily manna fed (Hymn 180)

We have to know what it is to be feeding on the preciousness of Christ to God.

G.C.McK. So this is dwelling in the house of Jehovah, not only enquiring, but first of all dwelling. Does that relate to what we are speaking about?

J.A.B. I would be glad if you would say something as to the order of things here. We can understand what has been brought in about asking of Jehovah, and seeking after Him. We might think it would proceed to enquiring of Him in His temple, and only then dwelling, but it is not in that order. What would you say?

G.C.McK. I can see that it requires a settled state in the soul to be enjoying these things. I know we have the week to go through and work to go to and so on, but it seems to suggest that in the life of our souls we are settled and at rest. Do you think that is important?

J.A.B. Yes, I do.

J.Sp. I wondered if Simeon and Anna would illustrate the thought. They were dwelling in Jerusalem and when Christ came in, they immediately recognised Him. Would that not be fine in a reading, to

be in such a state that when Christ comes in, you recognised Him immediately? That is when the quickening comes in, do you think?

J.A.B. It is a very precious experience, is it not? And it gives reading meetings a character which other meetings do not have. I was thinking recently that there might be more coherence in an address, as one brother is setting out his thoughts in order; to some that might appear more attractive as you can follow a thought through. But in a reading contributions come in and there is a flow and a preciousness, a lustre, in a meeting like this that I would just like to value more. But I do value it especially as we are, I believe, proving it now.

A.McK. Is that how we see the body working? I think as we gather, we would know a measure of control, with the first man having gone in baptism, as you spoke of it earlier. But then what comes forward in the temple is what is of the Spirit through one or another.

J.A.B. That is interesting. To take these two references in the Psalms together, Psalm 99 brings in first of all the holiness of this area "He is holy!" (v 5) and it ends with the exaltation of Jehovah our God. We were speaking earlier about the spiritual altitude of what we are considering. But then it does not just say, 'Moses and Aaron ... and Samuel ... called unto Jehovah' but it says, "Moses and Aaron among his priests: and Samuel among them that call upon his name". The psalmist was referring to others who are doing this.

Moses and Aaron and Samuel were clearly prominent men, but it struck me that these verses in Psalm 99 are a very attractive reference to what God has in the body of the saints. There are those who are prominent and there are others too, and they are all for His pleasure. Would that be along the lines on which you are thinking?

A.McK. Yes, it is; I was thinking of Samuel earlier on. He dwelt in the temple, and Moses and Aaron were both acquainted with the idea of the holiness of God's house. We would hardly expect that there would be divine speaking unless there was a suggestion that there would be an answer to it.

J.A.B. I trust that there is an answer. We all need help in answering to divine speaking. It is all very well to speak as we are doing now, and I trust that there is a measure of help as to where divine speaking comes. But the test is how we answer to it. Samuel is a very fine example of that, "Speak, Jehovah, for thy servant heareth", (1 Sam 3: 9), and then it says, God did not let any of the words of Samuel fall to the ground.

M.G.W. Please say more about the order, "dwell", "behold" and "enquire" as leading to the exaltation and the worship of Jehovah. There must be an order there.

J.A.B. I think this is where we just make use of the resources that are available in such a meeting as this, which is the point of what we are saying. There is a dwelling, "that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life"; it would be what is characteristic, like being "of the truth". We cannot literally be together all the time. Very soon we shall be in each other's presence and most blessedly in the presence of the Lord Jesus for ever - what a day that will be and what speaking there will be then: how our hearts long for it! But in the meantime is this where we resort characteristically in our hearts? And also when we can be together, of course, we would be.

J.N.M. You will remember Mr Stoney's remarks about a believer's life being like a diving bell.

J.A.B. I have not read that. Please go on.

J.N.M. Well, when I was a teacher with a class, I was not thinking of beautiful divine impressions. I was watching the back row to make sure they were doing what I told them. But then that is like being down in the diving bell. You are in an alien environment and you do your work. But as soon as your shift is over, you are brought up to your own proper environment. Now the fact that you have to be there as a faithful steward does not debar you from this, does it? You are fulfilling righteousness and you return to holiness which is your proper life.

J.A.B. Yes, and even when you are down in the diving bell, there is that means of communication with the surface, there is that cord that

takes the air down, working all the time; otherwise you would die in that alien environment.

R.S.R. Is this spiritual dedication? - "all the days of my life". Do we not require to settle ourselves for divine things?

J.A.B. We certainly do and we will not prove much of what we are speaking about now as to beholding the beauty of Jehovah unless we know something about what you have just said. There is a symmetry about these exercises, is there not? Initially we get everything for nothing; God gives us free salvation, justification, pardon; all of these things are available for nothing. But after that we do not get anything for nothing; we get what we go in for.

R.S.R. The psalmist is impressed with the beauty of Jehovah. It is the attractiveness of Christ, is it not?

J.A.B. Well, how attractive, how interesting are the Scriptures to us? I can remember going to readings and thinking that they were boring - may be we all have at some time in our lives, listening to the brethren talking over things that were of no interest to us. It is good that we should go, of course, for we will get something but we will not get much. But as we realise the character of what is working in the temple, it just opens it all out. The light shines into our hearts. It may be in a meeting like this or it may be just two or three gathered on a Wednesday evening, as many brethren are nowadays, but this light shines in and illuminates the scene and really illuminates the beauty and glory of Jehovah.

H.T. Regarding the continuity of divine speaking, no-one is going to stop God speaking, but I want to be amongst those who hear what He is saying.

J.A.B. That is what I thought about in Psalm 99. I desire to be "among them that call upon his name". We will not be a Moses or an Aaron or a Samuel, but we can all be "among them that call upon his name", can we not?

G.B.G. You were speaking about how the temple functions and its atmosphere. I was wondering if family relationships facilitate the

temple's functioning, and the body working. In the body there are distinctions but not in the family. In the family we are all the same in relationship to the Father and so we have right family relationships.

As family relationships are right, we will benefit from the distinctions that the Spirit has made in giving one and another what they have, and then the temple will be known.

J.A.B. That is fine. I thought that Psalm 99 was a picture of that.

There are those who are prominent and there are others, but they are all calling upon His name. "They called unto Jehovah, and he answered them". I am sure it does not mean that He answered only Moses, Aaron and Samuel. He answered those who were calling upon His name. As in every other part of the divine system, it is love that binds it together, and love operates in the temple setting as in every other setting.

D.McG. I was just thinking of what has been said that nobody will stop Jehovah from speaking. Twice over Samuel heard the voice and it says, he rose up and he ran. He was lying in the very presence of the ark of God. No matter how dark the day is, if we keep our links with Christ, we shall hear the voice, but then Eli had himself to come into the situation although himself diffident in the matter.

J.A.B. That is right. God continued to speak to Samuel, even when He was misunderstood at first but then Samuel got the benefit of God's voice. I was thinking too of Samuel in terms of his mother's exercise, how she came to the temple and prayed to Jehovah. Eli thought she was drunk because her lips moved, but there was all the exercise on his mother's part that was involved in Samuel being in that area of the temple.

A.W. Samuel said, "Speak, Jehovah, for thy servant heareth". Is that the enquiring which we had in the previous Psalm? He recognised that there was something special there that he wanted to hear more of. Is that to be our attitude?

J.A.B. I trust that what we have been saying together in this meeting will stimulate us in that direction, so that we might be more interested

in what we enjoy together and also to see the divine pleasure that there always is in those who gather in this way. "Jehovah, our God, thou answeredst them: a forgiving God wast thou unto them ...

Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at the hill of his holiness; for holy is Jehovah our God". We look around and we see what has become deadened. I desire that we might all have an impression of the preciousness to heaven of the temple functioning.

R.S.R. I was thinking of this passage during the week. "Moses and Aaron among his priests". We link authority with Moses; what do you say about him being a priest?

J.A.B. You have been thinking about it, you tell us what your answer was.

R.S.R. Well, he had the ability to go in at all times. After the breakdown there was restriction, Aaron could go in only once a year. But it appears that Moses was so intimate that he had access at all times to go into the holiest.

J.A.B. Very good. I think it has been said that unless we know what the closet is, we will not know much about what the temple is.

Unless we know what it is to go into the presence of God on our own, to shut the door and kneel down, to know the blessedness of divine speaking in that context we are not going to know too much of what we are speaking about now. But I do trust that we might all be encouraged that God is still speaking to us, and that we are in an area of things where light shines in temple character. May we value it more and see the preciousness of it to heaven.

DUNDEE

7 December 1996

Key to initials

J.A.Brown, Grangemouth; G.B.Grant, Dundee; J.C.Gray, Dundee; D.McGregor, Lochgelly; A.McKay, Brechin; G.C.McKay, Glasgow; J.N.Mather, Dundee; A.Munro, Grangemouth; R.S.Renton,

Edinburgh; J.Spinks, Grangemouth; H.Taylor, Abderdeen; A.Walker,
Dundee, M.G.Wood, Dundee

OUR ANSWER TO DIVINE SPEAKING

John A. Brown

Psalm 27: 7,8; Song of Songs 2: 8-17; Genesis 35: 14; Revelation 22: 26,17,20

In the reading, we enquired about how God continues to speak to us. His speaking is always in love, and always in a way which would touch our consciences. What I would like to speak about now is the need for an answer to God's speaking. How do we respond to what God says to us? I would have to acknowledge that I have heard God's word often but I have not answered to it. It may be in personal circumstances, or in a meeting; I have had to acknowledge that something has been said which has affected me. Then perhaps a week later I have had to think back and ask, What result was there in me from what God said to me then? I have often had to acknowledge - not much. God in His faithfulness to us is speaking all the time. He is speaking of Jesus, and the Lord Jesus too is speaking to His people all the time. The test for me, and I acknowledge how much I need it, is that there might be a response to divine speaking in my own experience and in my life.

Now, some who are younger might wonder about what we had in the reading. We were speaking about the voice of God. Peter could write of "such a voice", 2 Pet 1: 17. We spoke about the temple and how it operates as we enquire into the Scriptures. But sometimes God may speak very gently and individually to us. That is why I have read this Psalm. Verse 8 is very interesting. It may not be that we suddenly hear a loud voice, although some have had that experience. Most often we might hear the soft, gentle voice, as it came in 1 Kings 19. So the psalmist says to God "My heart said for thee, Seek ye my face". That is your conscience is being acted upon, and you know in your heart that God is saying something to you, you know there is an appeal. It can just be something in your own experience, in the quietness of your own heart. Your heart says to you on God's behalf "Seek ye my face". It can be as simple as that. It would be the voice of Jesus - "Seek ye my face". Now there

is an immediate answer "Thy face, O Jehovah, will I seek". That is what I want to speak about, that answer. In verse 7 the psalmist says, "Hear, Jehovah", it is an appeal to God to hear him "with my voice do I call; be gracious unto me, and answer me". The psalmist is calling on God to answer him.

Dear young brother, dear young sister, God will never refuse to answer a call made to Him in genuineness of exercise. He will never ever refuse such a call - "be gracious unto me, and answer me".

There will always be an answer to a call made like that to the Father or to the Lord Jesus. But in the next verse God's own call comes to the psalmist in the quietness of his own heart - "Seek ye my face", and there is an immediate answer in the psalmist, "Thy face, O Jehovah, will I seek". That is what I would desire for myself and for every one of us, that there might be this kind of answer to what God has done, and to what He is saying to us. As we saw in the reading, He is speaking all the time, His speaking continues. I trust that something of what was said earlier would have this character, a gentle voice in love addressed to the conscience - "Seek ye my face". It may be that these four words would act on someone's conscience here this afternoon, someone perhaps who is not as close to God, is not as close to their Saviour, as they once were. Oh that you might just hear these words - "Seek ye my face", and that may there be this answer "Thy face, O Jehovah, will I seek".

I want to speak of the verse read in the Song of Songs as indicating an individual's experience. Often we apply this passage to the assembly, and that is a very blessed way of taking up this scripture. But I would like to apply it to myself, and for you to apply it to yourself. You are the speaker, "The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh". Have you heard the voice of Jesus in the gospel? I trust that there is no one here that has not answered to the voice of Jesus in the gospel, as He would call "Come unto Me". That would be "The voice of my beloved!". I would desire for myself to hear the voice of the One who has given Himself for me. It is He who is speaking here and later on it says "My beloved spake and said unto me". The Lord Jesus in type is speaking to the one He loves, and He

is looking for an answer. I trust that there is no-one here who has not answered in love to the appeal of grace in the gospel. You have done that; I trust you have. If you have not, then do it now, answer to the appeal that the Lord Jesus would make to you in love. I trust, dear young person, that you have answered to this appeal of grace, to the presentation of the Lord Jesus in the gospel. Thank God if you have. Then you may have heard the voice of the Lord Jesus saying to you, "This do, in remembrance of Me". I trust that you have answered that appeal too, that call of the Beloved. Speaking can be general, but it also comes to us as individuals, and if you have not answered to that call yet, the Lord Jesus would speak to your heart not, "This do, in remembrance of Me". What a wonderful thing it is to answer to that call to devotion and committal to Christ in a world which has cast Him out.

Now you may have done that, and yet not be fully in the enjoyment of your links with the Lord Jesus, the One who loves you. Taking this scripture as applying to us individually, that is the position of the speaker here. "Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, Skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart". It maybe that you love Him, and recognise His voice, but you may have got away a little. He would come and appeal to you in this way. There are things here that are between the speaker and her Beloved; the wall, the window, the lattice. Something has come to spoil the nearness, for she is not with Him. But in love He comes to her, and He appeals, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away". The Lord Jesus would appeal thus to you today, if you are not in the closeness of communion that He would have you in.

Answer in your heart's affections to this call - "My beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For behold, the winter is past". It is not necessary to dwell in winter conditions where the Lord Jesus is not. "The rain is over, it is gone". We can be where it is winter; it is not that we do not know the voice of the Beloved, for she recognises it, but it may be that we are not enjoying the closeness to Jesus where we should be, and that He would have us experience. What an appeal it is! This is Jesus' own

voice - "The rain is over, it is gone: The flowers appear on the earth; The time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land". What a wonderful place it is to get into. It is really what we were speaking of together earlier; the things which Peter knew when he spoke about the holy mountain and the most excellent glory. What a wonderful place it is. We can get into it at any time. We know something about it especially when we come together, but we can get into it at any time. The Lord would appeal to us now, and my desire for myself is that there might be an answer to what He is saying in love. Divine speaking is always in love, and if listened to always touches the conscience.

Well, the speaker here was in a dangerous place, she was in the cleft of the rock, the covert of the precipice. He wanted her to come away from that - "Let me see thy countenance", He says, "let me hear thy voice". I thought that that might link with what we read in Psalm 27, "Hear, Jehovah; with my voice do I call; by gracious unto me, and answer me". The Lord Jesus loves to hear your voice. Have you prayed to Him when you have been in a place which could be dangerous? Have you asked Him for help in answering to His call in affection? I trust that there is no one here who has not addressed their voice to the Beloved, to the One who wants to hear you - "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; For sweet is thy voice". The Lord Jesus loves those who would call on Him; He is always there to answer. Other things come in, not necessarily wicked things or evil things, just little things, these little foxes that spoil the vineyards. Well, you know, and I know, what these little foxes are. It may be that you allow something to come in to disturb your communion with the One who loves you. You may not quite be able to find time to get to a meeting or follow up an impression. You will know what these little foxes are in your experience. Well, the Lord here wants them taken away because they spoil the vineyards, they spoil what is for His heart's pleasure; in effect they spoil the answer to His love from those who love Him.

The sad thing here is that she did not for the moment answer to this call. He turns and goes away. She begins to speak again "My

beloved is mine, and I am his". There is no doubting her love for her Beloved, and that may be so with you or me, there is no doubting our love, we love the One who has died for us. But then He moves off and she appeals to Him to turn and come back "Turn, my beloved: be thou like a gazelle, or a young hart, Upon the mountains of Bether".

But she does not move. She is still "On my bed, in the nights". She does not move with Him, as He wanted her to move when He said "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away". For the moment she does not answer. O, dear brethren, let there be an answer from each one of us, in affection, to this appeal. It is the appeal of love to each one of us in our lives and in our experiences - "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For behold, the winter is past".

Let there be a definite answer to the appeal of love which is always directed towards us. I feel for myself the need of a definite answer.

That is why I read in Genesis 35. How gracious and patient God was in His dealings with Jacob. He spoke to him again and again. Jacob came to Luz and built an altar because God had appeared to him there when he fled from the face of his brother.

Now God appeared to him again. What a gracious and patient God we have. If you have not listened to the voice of God in the past, God would give you another opportunity today; He would appeal to you again. It may be that you have often listened to the divine appeal and said, Not yet. It may be that in relation to the appeal of the gospel you have said, Well, I will leave it for now. You may often have heard the appeal, This do in remembrance of Me, and you have left it. Well, God in His grace and love would have you hear the appeal again. God appears to Jacob again, and He says almost exactly the same thing to him as He had said before at Bethel "Thy name is Jacob, thy name shall not henceforth be called Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name". If you look back at chapter 32 you will see that what God said to him had been almost exactly the same - "Thy name shall not henceforth be called Jacob, but Israel" (v 28). What a tremendous voice that had been to Jacob, but for the moment he had not answered to it. He had gone off, there was the diversion to Shechem, and we know what happened there; the disgrace of

chapter 34. But God in His love for Jacob brings him through this exercise again, and now He appeals again in almost exactly the same terms as He had done before. And this time there is an answer from Jacob. This time it says, "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had talked with him". That is what my exercise is, dear brethren, that there might be in our own experience a definiteness of answer to the speaking of divine Persons to us. Oh that we could look back and say, 'God spoke to me then and there was an answer'. Jacob set up a pillar in the place where God had talked with him. It says in the previous verse "And God went up from him in the place where he had talked with him" (v 13). So Jacob marked that place by setting up this pillar, and more than that, there was what was for the pleasure of God; he poured a drink offering on it, and he anointed it with oil, he poured oil on it. Think of the satisfaction that God had in the way Jacob answered this time. There had not been a full answer to His previous speaking to him, but this time there was an answer. So it says, "they journeyed from Bethel"; in verse 29 it is now Israel that journeys, and in verse 27 he comes to Isaac to Mamre, to the place of the purpose of God. That is the end of divine speaking, dear brethren, that we might move forward, that we might make progress into God's purpose for us.

May we all be exercised to move in the way that Jacob did. He is an example of some one who often failed. He had wandered, but now he came back to his father to Mamre, to Kirjath-Arba, which is Hebron where Abraham had sojourned. This was his destination, and God brought Jacob back into His purpose for him. Jacob would be able to look back on Bethel and remember the pillar there, and the drink offering and oil poured on it. It was something definite arrived at in his experience, an answer to divine speaking. Jacob is a good example for us all. He had been the object of the patience and grace of God, and here he comes to something which is substantial and permanent, something which must have given God great pleasure as Jacob poured out the drink offering and the oil on this pillar at Bethel.

Well, we have the end of all of this in Revelation 22. We were reading locally in Acts 2, and we had an impression of the way in

which the Holy Spirit came in at Pentecost. There was something very special, of course, about Pentecost; it was the inauguration of things, and there was a tremendous initial power and freshness about God's work then. The exercise in reading the book of Acts was to see how, despite the weakness and failure that has come in publicly, what was set on by God initially goes through in power, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So here we have the final answer to all of God's speaking, to all His dealings throughout this whole dispensation. The whole period from Pentecost right through to the end has run its course, and now the Lord Jesus says, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. That means that divine speaking is known in the assemblies. This speaking of the Lord Jesus is continuing, and will continue, but not for very long now, because the end will be very soon. But meantime the Lord Jesus is testifying these things in the assemblies. 'I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star'. He would appeal to us, dear brethren, in relation to His soon coming. And there is an answer it is the final answer to divine speaking, and it is a full answer, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come". I would love to be in consonance with this answer. The Spirit and the bride are together in saying this. "And let him that hears say, Come". Have you ever been on your knees or in a meeting and just felt how much you wanted the Lord Jesus to come? What will it be to be with Him for ever.

How our hearts long for that! All these other things, these little foxes, sometimes divert our attention from the imminence of the coming of the Saviour, but here there is this answer, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come". I believe, dear brethren, that that is the answer to the testimony, to the divine speaking in the assemblies.

The Lord Jesus in grace and patience continues to testify in the assemblies, and now there is this wonderful collective answer from hearts which love Him, "Come". The divine answer comes back, "He that testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly. Amen; come, Lord Jesus". That is the final answer. And soon we shall hear these words said, soon we shall hear the Lord Jesus saying, "Yea, I come

quickly", that assembling shout. He is coming! May we be maintained in freshness of affection for Him, and in life and in power in our answer to the appeal of divine speaking, for His Name's sake.

DUNDEE

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