

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE LORD AS PROPHET

GOING ON

THEY TWO WENT ON

THE LORD AS PROPHET

Mark 1: 1-3, 9-13; 3: 13-15; 16: 19, 20

P.v.d.B. I thought we might consider the many glories of the Lord Jesus as they are presented to us in the four gospels. What He is particularly as Prophet in Mark's gospel; as Priest in Luke's gospel, His priestly service; in Matthew as King; and in John His personal glory, and the way it bears on the testimonial position in which we find ourselves. Subjects of the mercy of God, we have been brought into the light of the recovery that God has given and the prophetic line that has come through in ministry, and is going through. It governs us in the testimonial position, and the priesthood of Christ is available in the following up of what comes to us authoritatively in ministry. The priestly service of Christ on high, and Luke's gospel presenting the priestly conditions, are so necessary in the following up of the prophetic line and there is need for discernment. In Matthew's gospel it works out in the responsible setting. How much breakdown there has been in the responsible line, but there is no breakdown on the divine side. God has His Prophet, His Priest, His King, and underlying all is the glory of the Person, His personal glory in John's gospel. Of course all these services enter into all the gospels, but each of the gospels is distinct in the way in which they are presented; they are the Holy Spirit's selection and they present to us the glory of a Man who will fill the eternal day, as we have been singing (hymn 293), when God Himself will rest in all that speaks to Him of Christ, the Man of His purpose. I thought we could consider the Lord Jesus in His perfect bondmanship in Mark's gospel the glory of the One who came in a body prepared for Him and filling out divine services. We have the "beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God" - the glory of what He is as Son of God, underlying what we are speaking of; and the reference to His movements - that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, the way the Spirit came upon Him, and the distinction in Mark that He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. The voice was "Thou art my beloved Son". The Spirit had come upon Him and He was sent.

The Lord was not sent until the Holy Spirit came upon Him. Then, in chapter 3, He goes up into the mountain and sovereignly calls His disciples: it says "whom he himself would". Then He appointed the twelve that they might be with Him. How important it is for the servant to be with Him! Finally, in chapter 16, the Lord is working with them, having gone up into glory at the right hand of God. I thought we might consider this.

L.McF. So it is the beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ. This is a new departure, we might say, from what preceded in the Old Testament, that there is now a Person on the earth who is in relation to the glad tidings. Maybe we could get a little help on that.

P.v.d.B. In the Old Testament, it was anticipated that in the fulness of time God would come out in the way He did, that God would raise up a prophet - in Deuteronomy 18; also that He was Priest according to the order of Melchisedec (Ps 110: 4); and what He is as King, "a king shall reign in righteousness", Isa 32: 1. It was all anticipated in the Old Testament that the One who was coming was to come out as Prophet, Priest and King, and then the glory of that Person that He is over all God blessed for ever. There was no change in the Person of the Lord Jesus when He came into manhood, but there was a change in the condition He took, in which He could fill out the service that was committed to Him.

J.A.P. Is there a strong connection between the thought of the Prophet and the glad tidings? It seems to me that we need to be revived about the glad tidings.

P.v.d.B. Yes. I think that the prophetic word was very distinct in the beginning of the recovery and that it brought the saints back to Paul's ministry; and towards the end of Mr Darby's time to the truth that followed that ministry drawing our attention to John. It is through John, that in the breakdown in which we are publicly, the truth as to what had been committed to Paul was given. I think that is the distinctive feature of the recovery, that we are brought back to Paul's ministry and that John gives us the conditions in which this can be worked out in a broken day.

H.G.H. And it is part of the glad tidings, is it not? So that Paul's ministry would fill it out. Is that right?

P.v.d.B. That is right. It is Paul's glad tidings which are very distinct. There is a lot of gospel activity going on, but the recovery was to Paul's glad tidings. We have references in Paul's ministry to what is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. That is what was there at the beginning - along with the apostles there were the prophets. And as we take account of the present dispensation, we have the prophetic line; it is carried through in the Spirit's power. The distinctive feature of the recovery is the ministry of the apostle Paul. This is where the departure dispensationally has been, from what was set out in Ephesus: in Philadelphia the recovery is to what was departed from in Ephesus.

N.J.H. Was Mark himself not recovered to bondmanship?

P.v.d.B. That is very good and he was available to Paul at the end. Paul said to Timothy that he was to bring Mark with him, for "he is profitable to me for service", 2 Tim 4: 11. That is the writer of this gospel. He was a young man; he lost his way in a sense in service but he was recovered and he was available to Paul. So that in Mark's gospel we can expect Paul's glad tidings, as he would be acquainted with Paul. Also Luke was with Paul; that might enter into what we might consider later; that Luke was also there. "Luke alone is with me" Paul says at the end, 2 Tim 4: 11.

D.M.W. Does Paul's glad tidings bring in another order of things here and does that not link with the beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, another order of manhood entirely?

P.v.d.B. I think so. I think we need to see that the gospel has the assembly in mind and that it proceeds from the house of God and that it is to bring us into the house of God - that is Paul's glad tidings - the truth of the mystery too, Christ and the assembly. There is a lot that is going on independently, but the testimony is subject to the Lord's speaking. The movements in the wilderness were by the Lord's commandment; the word 'commandment' there is literally

'mouth' (Exod 17: 1); it is the Lord's current speaking that governs the testimony.

H.J.G. I believe you have something more to say about Jesus being baptised and the Spirit coming upon Him and the confirmation of heaven before He went forward.

P.v.d.B. I think He was not sent until the Holy Spirit came upon Him. It then says in Mark "immediately the Spirit drives him out into the wilderness". That is distinctive in Mark's gospel. In Luke it says that He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness (Luke 4: 2) and in Matthew that He was carried by the Spirit in the wilderness, Matt 4: 1. But in Mark He is driven; it is the immediateness of what we see in Mark's presentation that the truth does not ask for any delay. The word is always, "To-day if ye will hear his voice", Heb 3: 7.

H.G.H. Is there also in the thought in the driving the full extent of a bondman, that is there is urgency.

P.v.d.B. That is what we see. All the writers of the epistles in the New Testament speak as bondmen. It is in that position that the truth comes to us. The perfect Bondman and Prophet is presented to us in Mark and that is the pattern for service. ·

C.E.H. Would it also include the thought of the Mediator - Mediator of the new covenant? Would that correspond with Moses, "God will raise up unto thee a prophet ... like unto me", Deut 18: 15. Moses was a prophet, was he not? He represented God.

P.v.d.B. He was in very close relations with God. Mouth to mouth God was speaking to Moses, was He not, Num 12: 8? What is mediatorial is seen in that way, that the truth comes to us in Christ; He is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. Along with the authoritative side presented to us in Mark's gospel, the priestly side is needed in Luke's gospel.

H.G.H. The second verse of chapter one refers to John the Baptist no doubt, but it speaks of him as a messenger. Is not bondmanship or subjection the thought in that? That is, Mark, as having once

failed, would get hold of the need for subjection and so he would emphasise it. Is that right?

P.v.d.B. John prepared a way - "who shall prepare the way", it says. The way for the Lord was prepared by John the Baptist's ministry, and he was a prophet. There was no one greater among those born of women than John the Baptist, the Lord says, Matt. 11: 11. He was a great man, but the least in the kingdom would be greater than he. So this dispensation is a very wonderful dispensation; it has great distinction. It brings in new creation, a new order of man altogether and here Jesus appears as Prophet in Mark's gospel. The way was prepared for Him in John the Baptist's ministry; and John says, "He must increase, but I must decrease," John 3: 30. What a servant he was, sent from God!

H.W.J. I do not want to detract from what you are just saying, but I was thinking of being driven by the Spirit. It would not imply any resistance, would it?

P.v.d.B. No. But it is the urgency that moves the servant immediately. That is what marks Mark's gospel and it distinguishes it, does it not - the immediateness in which the Lord Jesus was driven by the Spirit in the wilderness - and it brought out the perfection of the Servant that was there. Just think of the glory of this Person, what the stoop was that He made in taking a bondman's form, He who did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God (see Phil 2: 6). He took the bondman's form, did He not? The glory of that enters into this, the spirit of a bondman. It says of the Hebrew bondman that he came in with his body, Exod 21: 3. There is holy perfection in that, and what the enemy brings out in the temptations only brought out the perfection of that Servant who was there.

L.McF. So heaven comes into prominence. He saw the heavens opened and then there is a voice out of the heavens. This is distinctive, and it is intended to arrest our attention, do you think?

P.v.d.B. It is - the glory of Jesus as the Son of God. God revealed His Son in Paul and Mark was acquainted with Paul, Gal 1: 16. The

Son was revealed to Peter in Matthew (Matt. 16: 17), but the Son was revealed in Paul. Mark begins his gospel, "Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God".

C.F.D. I wondered whether verse 1 - "the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God" - is not a link with what Paul brings out himself, because in the Acts of the apostles, when Paul was converted he immediately preached Jesus that He is the Son of God. I wondered whether Mark beginning his gospel in this way was not a reflection of the impress that he had received from Paul, his contact with Paul.

P.v.d.B. That is right. In Paul's conversion, as he was converted and received the Holy Spirit, immediately he preached that Jesus is the Son of God.

C.F.D. Why do you think Mark begins in that way? Does he suggest that, in the preaching of the word, the Son of God, the deity of Christ, is the prime issue? What is your thought about that?

P.v.d.B. I think it shows that this is what is basic in the servant's service. We do not get the Lord's birth referred to in Mark's gospel - we have it in Matthew's gospel in connection with the King, and in Luke's gospel, the holy conditions in which the Lord Jesus came in, "the holy thing also which shall be born shall be called Son of God", Luke 1: 35. John gives us what the Lord Jesus is in His eternal personality, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". But the servant has not status in that sense, His birth is not referred to, but the immediateness of His service comes in, "Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God". He will suddenly come into His temple, it says, Mal 3: 1.

We want the young people to be on the alert because Mark was a young man and we are looking for the next generation to carry on if the Lord does not come before, and we want them to be ready for it. There was a young man in Mark's gospel when the Lord was raised, and that is distinctive in Mark's gospel - a young man. So when the Lord enters into Jerusalem in Mark's gospel it is only the colt that is referred to. We read this morning at home that the Lord Jesus in Matthew called for the ass and the colt and He sat on them; that

would be the two generations - the Lord "sat on them" - but in Mark's gospel it is only the colt. I think it is the young generation that is particularly in mind in Mark. We want to encourage our young people in relation to the truth as it has come to us prophetically and see as the Lord may help us in the course of our meeting, that all help is available in the priesthood of Christ.

J.A.P. Why does it say about the young man, "And Jesus looking upon him loved him", Mark 10: 21?

P.v.d.B. It shows the affections of the Lord in relation to our young people. How much has happened amongst the saints that might tend to discourage our young people, and in a sense we have to take the blame on ourselves for it, but the Lord is very gracious and we are in a day of recovery. As has been said, Mark was a recovered servant. He took on the service; it says they took Mark as an attendant - one who carries your bags, Acts 13: 5. I believe that is a good service for a young brother, to start on that line. But then he did not continue with Paul. The Holy Spirit had called Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them. That was the Holy Spirit sovereignly speaking, calling them to service (Acts 13: 2) and Mark was identified with those two servants. But he separated from them and went back to Jerusalem. Then in Jerusalem there were the twelve. It is very interesting that Peter refers to "Marcus my son" (1 Peter 5: 13) so there may be a link there with Peter. He missed his way in connection with Paul, then there was the link with Peter, and then he is available to Paul at the end. We may refer to Peter later, but this is what we see at the end of Paul's course; Paul finished his course and he finished his course in victory. We want to finish our course in victory too, dear brethren, the older ones amongst us particularly, we want to finish our course in victory. Paul was in full control at the end; he said, "the Lord stood with me", 2 Tim 4: 17. Timothy was to come and to bring his cloak, the parchments and the books, and to bring Mark for he was profitable for ministry.

M.M. The motive for committal with the Hebrew bondman was love. Is that to be seen in our committals? It gives the basis for being

committed to the Lord and His people and whatever service might be opened up for any of us.

P.v.d.B. Very good. That is it - "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free", (Exod. 21: 5) - and thus the Lord Jesus committed Himself to service. According to eternal purpose and counsels, He came into manhood; Hebrews contemplates that. In Hebrews it says, "coming into the world he says, Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not; but thou hast prepared me a body ... Then I said, Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, Of God, thy will", Heb 10: 5-7. "Thou hast prepared Me a body". The Hebrew bondman came in with his body (see footnote Exod 21: 3) and he committed himself to service, he would not go out free.

H.G.H. So in verse 11 of chapter 1 it says, "And there came a voice out of the heavens; Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". Here is the beginning of His public service but the Father had His eye upon Him before that and He acted in bondmanship then too. Would you say there was that which pleased His eye and it would be in subjection, would it not?

P.v.d.B. Yes. He took a place in subjection in coming into manhood. He came into the world and took a bondman's form. He came into a relationship in which He was subject to the will of Another.

H.G.H. So is that not to be the beginning with us all. The Holy Spirit was given to those who obeyed, it is to mark the young people, to mark us all of course, but as obeying, as being subject, the Holy Spirit would come upon us.

P.v.d.B. That is right. When we think of the Lord's obedience that is a very high standard of obedience. Paul says in 2 Corinthians that every high thought has to be brought down and led into captivity to the obedience of the Christ (2 Cor 10: 5). We are to be marked by that obedience. The Lord said, "Not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. And Peter says, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ", 1 Peter 1: 2. That is

before us every Lord's day; in the loaf we have the obedience and in the cup we have the sanctification of the blood of Jesus Christ.

H.G.H. So that even the spirits of the prophets are to be subject to the prophets, 1 Cor 14: 32. We never leave that subject, do we?

P.v.d.B. No. It all becomes so simple when we look on Jesus, the Author and Completer of faith. The way that He took the bondman's form. It says in Philippians 2: 5 "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". That does not make it difficult, does it? We make it difficult. But we have the Holy Spirit and when we look on Jesus we are motivated to have that mind that was in Him.

P.F.v.d.B. Is the obedience and readiness of the Lord as a bondman seen in the fact that in Mark's gospel we often get the word 'immediately' and 'straightway'. Would that show His readiness as a bondman?

P.v.d.B. Very good. That is what we see in Mark's gospel, the way that the Servant moved. He did not wait, He did not postpone His commission. When the voice comes we move.

N.J.H. Things can only continue in His spirit, the spirit of Christ, and the heavens parting asunder would show how the support is available, irresistible support.

P.v.d.B. That is right. So that we have the word of God and the priesthood of Christ to help us - we may touch on that if the Lord will, that we have the priestly service of the Lord Jesus. I think we need to see what has come to us in the history of the recovery, what has been maintained and where the principles have been maintained in all that has happened and to see that there is, thank God, the evidence of the ministry of the Spirit currently and the truth coming out in freshness. Israel moved in the wilderness by the commandment of Jehovah. And where the testimony was the manna was, where also the rock followed, that was the confirmation of it; wherever the testimony was, there was the confirmation of it in the food that was given and in the drink that was given.

H.J.G. Is the public testimony as you spoke of it in the beginning maintained in these two things we have been speaking of, that is, the anointing of the Spirit and the subjection of the bondman?

P.v.d.B. That helps.

H.J.G. You referred to Deuteronomy where God said He would raise up a prophet like unto thee, that is Moses, and He said He would give him His word, Deut 18. That would be the anointing if the Spirit would it not?

P.v.d.B. So that the two go together. We may miss our way and although we do not cease to be the Lord's we lose the vital link with the testimony.

H.G.H. So that in Mark 3 He goes up into the mountain, and calls whom He would.

P.v.d.B. There is sovereignty in that the Lord calls whom He would. Then it says that He appointed twelve that they might be with Him. It is of all importance for the servant to be with the Lord. We are thankful for the Lord being with us, the evidence of it, but the prime matter is that the servant is with the Lord. The Lord said, "Where I am, there also shall be my servant", John 12: 26.

H.G.H. None of us should elect ourselves out of it, should we?

P.v.d.B. No. It is open to us all and we should all be available in that sense.

M.C. I was wondering about chapter 1, if we have not already referred to it - He was tempted by Satan. We already noticed some of the distinctions in the various accounts. The other accounts speak of being tempted of the devil. Is there anything in that?

P.v.d.B. Yes. I think we too can experience that; we are all tempted but the Lord Himself was tempted without sin, which we could not say. It brought out the holy perfection of the Lord Jesus, He would not be affected by any of these things and He never turned any circumstances in His own favour. He went through in holy subjection and whatever the enemy did, he did not find in Him what he would

find in us. So that we have a Priest who feels with us for He has been tempted in like manner, it says but without sin, Heb 4: 15.

N.J.H. Satan is referred to as an adversary.

P.v.d.B. Yes. You can see, ultimately, how the devil in the book of Revelation is over against what is seen in the synoptic gospels, that is, as anti-prophet, anti-priest and the anti-king over against the official glories of the Lord Jesus. The false prophet stands over against God's Prophet and the dragon is anti-priest in accusing the brethren day and night, and then there is the antiking in the beast.

This follows the assembly's course here; it will come to a head in that way and it will be judged accordingly. There is a lot that is anti-prophet already in our day in opposition against what is prophetic in ministry. It is Satan's work against the truth.

L.McF. So He goes up into the mountain, and calls whom He Himself would. This is not a volunteer affair. What would you say about that? The Lord is calling certain persons, which would involve exercise to go where He is.

P.v.d.B. Yes. In Luke the Lord Jesus is praying all night before He chooses the twelve. Mark does not refer to that, he refers more to the sovereignty in it. There have been difficulties amongst the saints not accepting sovereignty.

S.W.D. I do not want to divert, but I was musing on how Mark's gospel would be connected with the prophet Zechariah to whom the word urgently was, "Run, speak to this young man", Zech 2: 4. And he it is that says, "And he shall say, I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground; for man acquired me as a bondman from my youth", Zech 13: 5. And going on he speaks about the excruciating sufferings of Jesus when the sword was raised against Jehovah's Shepherd. Is there a connection with Mark's gospel?

P.v.d.B. Very touching that, is it not? The Lord said, "Abba, Father" when He faced that, Mark 14: 36. Zechariah was a young man, he was a young prophet. I think our younger brethren should be encouraged, and sisters too, (it is open for sisters to prophesy; Philip had four daughters and they all prophesied). Zechariah saw the

complete thing in a day of breakdown, he saw the seven lamps, and he saw the completion of things in the hands of Zerubbabel in the day of small things. Things were going to be completed and it was not by strength nor by power but by My Spirit, saith the Lord (see Zech 4: 6).

I.C. I was thinking about what you said about Paul's ministry. Paul's sister's son, who was a young man, averted a crisis that would have meant the end of Paul's life. I wonder if that would help to encourage us all.

P.v.d.B. It certainly does. He saved the situation in relation to that elect vessel of the Lord. The Lord had shown him how much he would suffer for His name, but there was a young man who protected the apostle Paul and who was used because he was going to be brought to Rome, and the distinctive service of the apostle Paul was from there - in the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians; they were written from the prison in Rome and this boy was used to preserve the apostle from what the enemy sought to do against him.

H.G.H. Could that be likened to what we read in Mark 1, "the angels ministered to him"? Or is that unique to the Lord Jesus alone?

P.v.d.B. Yes, It must have been a sight for the angels to see God manifest in flesh, it had never been seen before; He was seen by the angels. They served Him, they are ministering servants.

J.A.P. These men about whom the spirit of God speaks in chapter 1 would all be young, would they not? James and John and the reference you made in chapter 3, "whom he himself would", they would all be young men. We should keep our eyes and ears open as to what God may be doing among those who are young.

P.v.d.B. That is right. I think that is the burden in Mark's gospel. There was a young man who lost his garment because he thought he could follow where none could follow. The young man clothed in a white robe in the sepulchre in resurrection would be the answer to this. I am not saying it is Mark but it certainly bears on the matter, that one may lose his garment in the testimony. There is justification in the Lord's resurrection.

M.M. In chapter 5, verse 13 the answer is in "and they went to him". There was a subjective answer to the sovereign claim, was there not?

P.v.d.B. That is right and they went to Him. Peter says "to whom coming", 1 Peter 2: 4. It is a great thing to be thus coming to Jesus; "to whom shall we go?", John 6: 68.

D.H.M. I was wondering whether if we had right feelings for what is precious to God, that would come into it. I was thinking of Nehemiah as one who was marked by these feelings but he was able to translate that into action and seemed to have an appreciation for what he had been brought in to. He said, "I am doing a great work", Neh 6: 3. What do you think?

P.v.d.B. That is right. "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down". They tried to divert him from building the wall and asked him to come to meet together in the plain of Ono. But Nehemiah would say, I am doing a great work.

K.N.P. I was thinking of the young man that said, "Here am I; send me", Isa 6: 8. It is availability. You speak about Mark; Paul say, "Take Mark, and bring him", 2 Tim 4: 11. He must have been available, he was ready. Do you think that is a test for us whether we are available and whether we are ready to take on a service like that?

P.v.d.B. Very good. The Lord has need of it, and we want to be available.

S.W.D. It is a great thing that we have Christian companionship. "Take Mark, and bring him with thyself"; that is two of you.

P.v.d.B. Very good. So there were Timothy and Mark travelling together. Paul's child Timothy, what a man he was! He had Paul's ways; he was so closely identified with Paul that he would remind the Corinthians of Paul's ways as they were in Christ (1 Cor 4: 17). Beloved brethren, it must be Christ, it must be Jesus, we must have Him before us. We sang in our hymn:

Thy grace, O Lord, that measured once the deep

Of Calv'ry's woe, to seek and save thy sheep (hymn 293)

That is the Man who is going to fill God's world and that is the Man that the gospels are engaged with. The gospels are the Spirit's selection - very brief, it does not take long to read all the gospels, but in them is what will fill God's world eternally.

N.J.H. Did Timothy not fill Mark's place?

P.v.d.B. Very good. Paul took Timothy up in Acts 16 verse 3 after he himself had been committed to the grace of God by the brethren. Barnabas was not commended according to the end of Acts 15 when he had taken Mark and went with him.

C.E.H. Would Timothy bringing Mark with himself to Paul be the carrying forward of what the Lord says here? To be with the Lord now would involve, would it not, being with what Paul represents?

P.v.d.B. So there are Timothy and Mark, and there was Paul's cloak which they were carrying; there were the books and there were the parchments - present ministry and ministry that has gone before. It was there as they came to Paul at the end.

C.E.H. Would that preserve the level of service in keeping with what is set out in Christ as the Son of God. The Lord preached and served as the Son of God in the liberty of a blessed relationship with God. Is that carried forward in being with Jesus and with those that the Lord is with?

P.v.d.B. It is basic; sonship is basic to anything that is being worked out in responsibility. It is basic to priesthood too.

L.D.P. I wonder if Isaac would fit in with what you are speaking of. It is said that Abraham built an altar there, and piled the wood; and he bound Isaac His son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood, and he stretched out his hand (Gen 22: 9,10). There is no indication that there is any resistance or any effort to get away on the part of Isaac, complete submission.

P.v.d.B. There was perfect submission, there was no resistance. He asked only one question, and Abraham said, God will provide a lamb for a burnt-offering. I think you get an indication - a very touching

indication - in Genesis of what was in the purpose of God in connection with the way God was going to come out in the fulness of time and that the Father and the Son went together, particularly in John's gospel they moved together in connection with the burnt-offering to secure the purpose of God. It comes out early in Scripture, in Genesis. Then there was the ram that was held by its horns - the ram-like devotion of the Lord Jesus in which He Himself stood in relation to the will of God, and herein lies the continuation of the testimony. He held Himself for the will of God. He was available. The ram was held to be available.

K.D.D. That comes out early, does it not, when the Lord said to His parents, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", Luke 2 49.

P.v.d.B. Very good. That was at the age of twelve. So that in chapter 16 we have this reference, "The Lord Jesus therefore, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven". He completed His service, He was taken up into heaven. "Whom heaven indeed must receive" it says in Acts chapter 3; the service being completed He returns to heaven. He had not been sent from heaven, He came from heaven and when the Spirit came upon Him He was sent and after He completed His mission He went back into heaven.

H.W.J. I was wondering if He did not, you might say, give a final prophetic word just before going back into heaven, here in Mark 16.

P.v.d.B. In the beginning of the book of Acts they asked Him questions as to whether He would restore the kingdom to Israel and the Lord told them that the Holy Spirit was to come upon them.

There was this conversation going on - no doubt it was at Bethany. According to Luke the Lord led them out as far as Bethany (ch 24: 50), and according to Acts 1 it was there that this conversation took place just prior to His being received up in glory.

H.W.J. I was thinking of this word in Mark 16: 16 "He that believes and is baptised shall be saved, and he that disbelieves shall be condemned." Was that not a prophetic word for them?

P.v.d.B. Yes.

N.J.H. What does it mean "the Lord working with them"? Could you help us on that, please?

P.v.d.B. I think that would be the result of being with Him. We want the Lord's presence, but the thing is, are we with the Lord? The servant must be with the Lord and then the Lord will be working with the servant, "the Lord working with them".

H.G.H. So Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4: 19, "but I will come quickly to you, if the Lord will; and I will know, not the word of those that are puffed up, but the power". That is, if we are with the Lord and He is with us, there is power.

P.v.d.B. That is right. That is a feature in Mark's gospel, that there is power and that there is authority. The word of God is in power; the Spirit is here, there has been a prophetic ministry, in this city too, that the Lord has honoured, and it has been given to us to continue in the line that the Lord has given in the recovery. What was in mind was Christ and the assembly. In the gospel we have the purpose of God in view. The gospel is not part of the purpose of God; it is part of the ways of God. The time will come when the gospel will not be preached any longer, but what is secured in the gospel will go through. It should be our concern that the light, the truth of the assembly, is maintained. The Lord might help us to see what is available, the resources that are available through the priesthood of Christ and how it would come out in administration here.

C.F.D. Do you think the matter of the Lord working with them is beautifully suggested in Acts 7 where the minister has so much to say, and he brings out so much as to what is prophetic in that chapter? It says, looking up into heaven he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God (see Acts 7: 55). Would it suggest that while the Lord's service is viewed as complete and perfect here, He sat at the right hand of God. Does it show that He was yet available to one like Stephen in the presentation of things to Israel, that He was prepared to move from His own side had Israel repented?

P.v.d.B. Very good. I think it is good to see that. Stephen saw "the glory of God, and Jesus standing". He gave his life as a martyr; he

says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit". The Lord was just ready for him. They rejected Him and now they were rejecting the Holy Spirit too. "And sent an embassy after him, saying, We will not that this man should reign over us", Luke 19: 14. In the rejection of Stephen, the Spirit was also rejected.

C.E.H. The One who was taken up into heaven is the One who is working with them. Does that involve the carrying forward of what the Hebrew bondman was, loving his master, loving his wife and loving his children, and does it involve the heavenly character of the Lord's service at the current time?

P.v.d.B. I think that is a good thing to see that the Lord is working in view of the assembly. It says of Jacob "for a wife he kept sheep", Hos 12: 12. It is the way the Lord Jesus is committed in view of the assembly.

S.E.MacC. Is that seen in John 4 verse 19 "Sir I see that thou art a prophet". The assembly was in view.

P.v.d.B. Very good. What the woman of Samaria discerned was that the Lord was a prophet. He had told her all things she had done. The Lord Jesus secured something that was of assembly character and was not until she recognised Him as a prophet that He said to her, "Woman".

D.M.W. "The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus", Rev 19: 10. What would you say about that concerning the reference in Acts 7, Stephen looking up and seeing Jesus standing?

P.v.d.B. We had a reading on that in New York earlier on, on the testimony of Jesus.

L.McF. The truth as it is in Jesus: that is what is to be carried forward.

P.v.d.B. It touches our hearts, does it not? He says at the end, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies", Rev 22: 16. You get the prophetic word in the book of Revelation and it finishes with this, "I Jesus", the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. The Lord said to Paul on the way to

Damascus, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest", Acts 9: 5. He was persecuting the saints.

D.M.W. "The Lord working with them", that is they were with the Lord and the Lord was working with them and therefore there was authority in carrying out bondmanship in service. But it is the Spirit of Jesus that comes out, is it not, that character of man who overcame everything in lowliness and meekness?

P.v.d.B. Yes, that is it.

A.S.H. The Spirit of Jesus that we have been speaking about would be seen in these persons. It says, - "And they, going forth, preached everywhere", the glad tidings are being spread.

P.v.d.B. Very good. So there was power in the testimony that proceeded. There was a Man taken up into glory and there was powerful testimony here in relation to the Man who was in the glory, that God had made Him both Lord and Christ.

J.A.P. There really was a lively position left by the Lord. They took the initiative and went out and preached and then it says "the Lord working with them". That is what we need to do, do the work and the Lord will help us in it.

P.v.d.B. Very good.

H.W.J. So what He began in Mark 1 now is spread everywhere, is it not?

P.v.d.B. Yes. It has spread to the whole earth. It is tremendous what has been secured on the basis of redemption and goes out in testimony, particularly in Paul's gospel, the truth of the new covenant and the truth of reconciliation; it enters into the preaching. The mercy of God and the grace of God - we may come to that in Luke's gospel.

P.Z. We read earlier that the voice came out of the heavens and they heard a voice saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". And then we have at the end here how the Lord Jesus sat at the right hand of God. I think it would impress us with

the Father's delight in His Son, how He has given Him a name above every name. I think that should impress us, do you not think?

P.v.d.B. I think so. I think the Lord was received with acclamation.

He entered into the presence of God, He was received up in glory, the work had been accomplished and the Holy Spirit came from a glorified Christ. The Lord said "after now not many days". It was after ten days that the Spirit came with first-hand knowledge of the glory of the One who had been received up in glory. And the testimony proceeded. The Spirit having come down the testimony went forth in power.

NEW YORK

31 October 1997

Key to initials

M.Cuckney, Malvern; I.Cumming, Edinburgh; D.H.Marshall, Edinburgh; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; K.D.Drever, Calgary; S.W.Drever, Calgary; H.G.Glass, Toronto; N.J.Henry, Glasgow; A.S.Hinkson, New York; H.G.Holt, Wheaton; C.E.Hunte, Barbados;

H.W.Jensen, Los Angeles; M.Matthews, Birmingham; S.E.Maccready, Rio Grande; L.Mcfarlane, New York; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; L.D.Phillips, New York; P.van den Berg, The Hague; Paul F. van den Berg, The Hague; D.M.Welch, Denton; P.Zaklama, New York.

GOING ON

Brian Clark

2 Kings 2: 6-8; Philippians 3: 9-12

A simple thought from the scripture we had on Saturday - "and they two went on". I am sure the Lord would encourage us continually.

How important it is not to stand still! I have the impression that in this chapter, Elisha and Elijah were going on: they were going on together. To go on you have to have an object before you. In the path, there is a goal before us. If any one of us is going to do something we look to what may be the result. I get the impression that they two went on in the power of what was before them. Paul would encourage us as to the importance of pursuing. How we need to! We are in a day that is marked by apathy and indifference, when perhaps it is easy to settle down, with perhaps some thought that we have something in the way of light and some understanding of the truth. But I think Paul, and I am sure the Lord, would encourage us to go on. We have sung as to the Holy Spirit being with us. We need to make use of the Spirit's power to give us strength to go on.

We have sung as to the Holy Spirit being with us. We need to make use of the Spirit's power to give us strength to go on. Think of how Paul could say "not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue". Think of that, "I pursue"! We need energy for that, we need food, as we have had recently. We need to have right food that would strengthen and help us and build us up so that pursuing is possible. We all know that if we are feeding on what is not really food, it weakens us so we could not pursue rightly.

Feeding on Christ Himself and all that belong to Him would, I am sure, give us strength. We know it in ourselves as proving the Spirit's help, that we are able to pursue. It is like the two that went on together. How wonderful that is! I suppose we could link it with our brethren. We desire to go on together, "cutting in a straight line the word of truth". How privileged we are to have those that we can go on with in the same path, not that it is exclusive in any way, apart from the fact that the Lord would have us in the Way that is narrow

which leads to life. I am sure that is what the Lord would have us to do, to enjoy life which is in Himself. So it says, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus". How glorious that is! How glorious it is to read, but it is another thing to know it from our own experience as proving it.

How it would change our view, change our thought, perhaps even alter our lives, if we really kept this before us, that we have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus! How often we have ourselves before us and things that are not going to build us up, but it would make us the more urgent. You get the sense here of Paul proving the Spirit's service. To be taken possession of is a living matter, not an historical one. These very words themselves are evidence that it is not just truth but is formative - "seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus". How wonderful it is! I think we would be helped, if we kept our eyes looking upward, looking off unto Jesus "the leader and completer of faith". How often we get bogged down by things here, not that we would be stoical, or unmindful of what is here, but to bring them into the presence of the Lord.

Bringing things before Him prayerfully and confidently gives us rest of mind and soul, as ever keeping Him before us.

Pursuing is possible, although it is a day marked by indifference, so we have to go against the current of things here.

The world has no place for Christ, it has no place for that glorious blessed Man who is at the right hand of God. For the believer, the lover of the Lord Jesus, it means going against the current. It is wonderful to know that the Spirit's help is available to us. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world". What a recompense, what a reward we have inwardly as keeping Him before us, pursuing, looking towards the goal.

These very scriptures would encourage. I had just that little thought relating to Elisha and Elijah that "they two went on". A lot more could be said as to that chapter, but I thought in that verse they had purpose of step, displaying life that was towards God and pleasing to Him.

May we be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

24 March 1998

THEY TWO WENT ON

Andrew Burr

Matthew 18: 15-20; Philippians 4: 1-3

I seek to add something to the idea of two, about "they two went on", 2 Kings 2: 6. I have been thinking about it since a reading where we looked at the burial of Jesus and those who had part in it, especially Nicodemus. Nicodemus is identified three times in John's gospel and on the first two occasions alone. It refers in John 19 to "Nicodemus also, who first came to Jesus by night" (v 39). On that first occasion he has to learn a very personal and individual matter relating to new birth and the initial work of the Spirit in him, a point at which all of us have begun, and a point which all of us have to accept as a beginning. It is not one that we had part in, exactly: it is a beginning of something that does not have its origin in what we are in the flesh.

In the middle of John's gospel, Nicodemus has to take a stand and show where he is in relation to the Lord Jesus under reproach.

He cannot wait there for others to speak with him, but he has to identify himself with Jesus, which is also very important. It relates to his public testimony. Chapter 19 relates more to the development of his inward exercises. New birth is one thing but burial is another.

They are lessons which have to be learnt in the life and pathway of the believer. It may be that we would begin to progress more quickly if the lesson of burial was more freely and fully faced. I do not say that as feeling I have nothing to learn as to it. We have been reminded what a solemn thing it is that Jesus has been cut off. The condition in which His pathway was lived has ended in death, and with it the flesh has ended before God. It has come under His judgment and is removed from His sight.

All these things are salutary and severe. They challenge so much that belongs to our natural lives and we are slow to face them. Death is a matter from which we shrink - the coldness of it, the power of it, these are things we feel. Nicodemus had them thrust

upon him. There was another one earlier on who had had the cross laid upon him. Nicodemus came to the point where the matter of burial could no longer be avoided, it had to be faced. What a comfort it is to find in John's gospel that when he faced it there was a brother to face it with - a good man, an honourable man, a just man, a brother; someone whose support for him in the council perhaps had not been as overt as one might have expected, but in relation to the burial of Christ, a brother associated with him in what it entailed.

So, there were two of them and they went on. They faced a needed service having to be undertaken of the gravest kind, but faced it together. What a wonderful thing it is that even in relation to things that are intensely personal, the idea that has been brought before us, of two going on.

It was in the light of this that I refer to this passage in Matthew's gospel. It is often taken up administratively, and it is often taken up in a rather negative way, but I just draw attention to its message that two may go on. Firstly, we have two who do not agree; they are in dispute about some matter, one has sinned against the other; but the object is that the two, as going over the matter with one another, might go on, and thus that they might be two where the Lord's presence would be known. If the brother is not gained, then the matter is taken up by another two, the brother offended and another, or perhaps two others, who are already together - "take one or two besides". How much we see when we look at this passage. The Lord has in mind what is normal, not what is residual as we sometimes suggest. I think He has in mind the functioning of what has been drawn attention to, two going on. The Lord wants the two involved in the difficulty to go on. If not, that one of them should find someone else to make two, or better still another two going on.

Their object, perhaps the three of them, would be to bring the offender in the assembly into functioning - to be one of two or more agreeing as to any matter on the earth. What a wonderful contrast, and out of all proportion to the difference of which the Lord first speaks, that there might be two going on to whom the Father would be prepared to give anything.

These very encouraging things relate to the passage already read (2 Kings 2: 9). It speaks of the double portion of the prophet's spirit, these are things that the Father would give and then in addition to what the Father would give, the Lord's own presence is assured.

Let us look at the scripture in this light. I do not bring it forward because I have any matter such as we have in verse 15 in my mind, but rather to show how the Lord keeps bringing forward two going on. My desire is that fellowship might be taken up in that way. The two going on is the next step from what is individual. The three would help us to keep from special friendships and anything of that kind. It is fluid who the two may be, but they are what is immediately available. The two represents our point of contact with fellowship and what is collective, two going on.

This is clearly what the apostle has in mind in Philippians. He starts with these two ladies whom he exhorts to be of the same mind; that is he exhorts them to be two going on. And in order to give weight to his exhortation he joins a brother with him in it, making two already going on - "I ask thee true yoke-fellow". Think of being a yokefellow with Paul, bound by the same yoke, serving the same Master, engaged in the same work, ploughing the same furrow; two going on. Then he brings in another, making the two or three. We have in Matthew one that takes one or two besides, and Paul is able to take two, "Clement also". He is another one who readily takes his place in this yoke, someone who has contended "along with me in the glad tidings". Then Paul goes on to speak of yet more yoke-fellows. What a concept he has in his mind. It is brought to bear upon this matter so that all of them, including the two to whom he first speaks, might be going on.

May He bless the word.

LONDON

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