

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 336

March 2001

Contents

THE DEATH OF JESUS

SIMPLICITY OF HEART

THE DEATH OF JESUS

Judges 14: 14; John 19: 25; 12: 1-8, 23, 24

J.McK. I wondered whether we could speak together about the death of Jesus, not just as meeting man's need and his condition, but involving the immensity of what God has done in time through the incarnation. It is an event to which we owe our eternal security and our present salvation. Therefore I trust that there will be interest among the brethren. It is one of the great subjects of scripture, the fact that Jesus died; not only that He lived, precious as that is, but the fact that He died forms the great turning point in the ways of God in view of the reaching of His great objectives.

I thought we could read the typical reference in Judges first, because the riddle of Samson is very interesting. The background is the death of the lion which the scriptures says "roared against him" (Judges 14: 5) - Satan's power in its ferocity and strength against Christ - and the wonderful fact is that his power was out-matched, "he rent it as one rends a kid" (v 6). Thus the superiority of the power that gained the great victory forms the background of this passage. But then from the carcass there was taken the honey, and the bees were there, suggestive of life among the saints. It is something that the Philistine does not understand.

In John's gospel we come to the reality that on the cross He who was none less than the Son of God, here in man's condition, gave up His life. Those four women of whom we read stood by. We might get some help together if we are sustained of the Lord to see the significance of standing by in that context.

Then in chapter 12 we have that well known passage where Mary, in the fulness of affection that marked her, anticipates what was about to happen. The Lord says, she has beforehand anointed my body for the burial (v 7). Her affections were going with Him in the downward way that would end in the death of the cross. Subsequent to that in chapter 12 we have a reference to the Son of Man. "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit" (v 24): then the reference also

to the prince of this world being cast out and the world being judged. Everything is measured by the immensity of what took place when Jesus died.

I trust that we shall be free and that there will be sustained interest so that the Spirit of God can enlarge our hearts as to Jesus.

E.C.B. What Paul says to Timothy “who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings” (2 Tim 1: 10), would bear on the rending of the lion and the swarm of bees?

J.McK. That is what I was thinking. He has annulled Him that had the power of death, and He has annulled death itself, and brought to light life and incorruptibility through the glad tidings. Thus there is something in the saints as a consequence of this that is in itself incorruptible. God has in mind that we should reach an order of things that is beyond any deterioration and the basis for it has been laid in the death of Jesus.

E.C.B. We perhaps need to deepen our impressions of the death of the Lord Jesus in John’s gospel, where His death is not presented as a sacrifice for sins, but is with a view to opening the door into another order of things altogether?

J.McK. So that His prayer, as approaching death, is a simple one, “Father, glorify thy name” (v 28). That is His one request as recorded in chapter 12. He does not ask for relief, but He does desire that the Father’s name should be glorified. In fact, Mr Darby says somewhere that God was indebted to Christ in that, at the cross, His character came out as nowhere else.

E.C.B. It is very remarkable to be able to take account of the death of Jesus in a way that was not presented as a sacrifice but opening the door to another order of things altogether. I am struck with the fact that in the scripture in Judges in three days they could not answer the riddle, but in three days the answer to every riddle was given in the resurrection.

J.McK. That is fine. The Philistine does not understand this, “Out of the eater came forth food”. Out of the death of Christ, a

circumstance which appeared to be public defeat, has come forth something that nourishes and strengthens the hearts of the saints. I think those women who stood by the cross in chapter 19 were strengthened as a consequence of what happened.

G.C.B. Would you explain how Satan came to have the power of death?

J.McK. Death itself is God's judgment in respect of sin. Satan acquired the power of death over man through the intrusion of sin - "the wages of sin is death". But through the intervention of Christ not only has the judgment of our sins been borne on the cross, but the penalty also has been sustained and removed. Thus, in the death of Jesus, the great encumbrance has been totally removed so that God's thoughts can be realised.

D.A.B. Satan entices us, does he not, into what might appear to be living, but it all results in death, whereas in the gospels we are brought to death in order that we might enter into life on the other side of it?

J.McK. There is an interesting scripture in Hebrews 2 which says that He tasted death for every thing. I find that of great interest, because the One who was the Creator of all things and for whom all things exist, who Himself was the heir of all things, actually gets possession of these things through redemption. He actually acquires the universal dominion that is rightly His by way of death itself, so that He tasted death for every thing. In that coming day, death itself will be removed, and the only basis upon which that can be is that Christ has been into it and has broken its power.

D.A.B. I was struck by the reference to taste in the riddle – sweetness - because we do not simply have life presented here in the riddle, but we have the power to sustain it and, further, the power to enjoy it, food and then sweetness. These are things that can only come out of the death of Christ.

J.McK. We are thus freed from any burden, or sense of encumbrance. Nevertheless we are kept humble as realising that everything we enjoy comes by way of death. We could not attain

this in our own strength. It is because He has been into death that we can have what strengthens, that we can enjoy the sweetness of the wealth and blessings of Christianity.

P.J.W. In John 6 He speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (see v 53). Could you help us as to that?

J.McK. That is nourishing food. Christ as in death becomes food for the soul. I think we need help as to our feelings as we speak of the truth. We can become very technical; perhaps our knowledge of the truth and the scriptures contributes to a certain coldness sometimes in the way we hold things. I think Mr. J.G. Bellett said that the ear is the gateway, the mind is the avenue, but the soul is the lodging place of divine truth. I think that helps us, because as we feed on Christ, His flesh and His blood become nourishing, affecting us throughout. What we are speaking of here is the greatest event that has ever taken place in the history of time. Mr Darby says that the cross stands alone in the history of eternity. God is glorified by it. What is reached is immutable and unchanging, as it is referred to in Hebrews - "once in the consummation of the ages" (Heb 9: 26). That verse should perhaps give us some impression that this is an event unsurpassed in history, unsurpassed in its importance, and greatness. We should benefit by such an impression, finding strength through it, and sweetness, seeing the wonder of how God has acted for Himself, that those who were themselves subject to the fall should be brought back into the area of divine blessing and enjoyment.

E.C.B. So there is no type that totally fills out the death of Jesus?

J.McK. No. Therefore all the types are needed.

E.C.B. There is no type of resurrection (save possibly the reference in Genesis 22, although Isaac did not die). No offering in the Old Testament was raised. I thought that underlined what you said that the incoming and death of Jesus is the consummation of the ages.

J.McK. Scripture is very interesting in the words it uses as the to the time when Jesus was on the earth. It was a unique period, very brief, thirty-three and a half years, but in its distinction standing out in all the centuries. In Galatians, Paul says, “when the fulness of the time was come”, Gal 4: 4. I take it that that refers to His birth, to His incoming, but the writer of Hebrews says, “once in the consummation of the ages”, Hebb 9: 26. Surely it makes this stand out as a landmark in God’s dealings with men, and as something that has universal bearing. I think the truth of what happened when Jesus died bears upon everybody, whether a believer or an unbeliever.

D.J.H. All this is because of who it was that died, it is the immensity of the fact that He died. There was never a life like that before and never will be again in that condition of blood and flesh; that period that you speak of, thirty three and half years, was unique in the annals of time. There was something here that was never here before and will never be here again. That blessed One died. All that adds to it, does it?

J.McK. And confirms what we were saying as to John’s gospel, the presentation of His death in John - the gospel which emphasises the greatness of who He was and indeed who He is - “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”, John 1: 14. That same gospel testifies, as we have read of it, of the moment when He relinquished His life as Man upon the earth. His own initiative was in that: because of the greatness of who He is, He had power in the day of death.

J.R.W. Could you say a bit more about that? He delivered up His spirit: what is involved in that?

J.McK. The word of scripture is very direct and I think the point in it would be that man had no hand in it; He died in obedience to the Father’s will. He would not, as another has said, have deprived God of what was so precious to Him had He not had a commandment to do it so He delivered up His spirit. These women were actually there when Jesus died.

P.M. Could you say a little more as to your remark as to the death of Christ in relation to the unbeliever?

J.McK. That He tasted death for every thing I think means that He has lifted the great encumbrance on the implementation of God's ways and that affects not only the saints, but the whole earth. Thus, the wicked dead will be raised.

V.E.W. So the death of Christ is a public matter? I was thinking of what you have said - its bearing upon all men.

J.McK. It brings out the extent to which men committed themselves against God, urged on by him who is the enemy and the deceiver men actually committed themselves to the rejection of Christ. God answered that, as we have said already, by His being raised from among the dead. That was a selective resurrection. The rest of the dead were left and Christ Himself was raised. I think this is one of the great truths in scripture that are of universal application.

E.C.B. It bears on the question that has just been asked. I have been impressed recently with how extensive the references are in the New Testament to God having all men in mind in the gospel. He desires that all men should be saved, and therefore, the death of Christ has a bearing on believers and on unbelievers. Those who believe will get the gain of it. Those who do not believe will be condemned for not believing when it was available to them. It is a bit like the older son, he would not go in.

J.McK. So that Christ is the propitiation, as John tells us, for our sins, but not for ours only, but the sins of the whole world, so also He has borne the judgment that is due to sin, and He has done it in totality. Thus the whole matter has been removed before God. God is therefore free in a full sense to come out towards all men in blessing.

E.C.B. I was thinking also of the reference of Romans 8, the whole creation groans and travails until now, but is awaiting the display of the consequences of redemption (see Rom 8: 22).

J.McK. So that the coming day will display what was affected at the cross. The glory of what was done there will not be seen until, in the new heavens and the new earth, there dwells righteousness.

E.C.B. We will then have the world that God loved.

D.A.B. In his address to Athens, Paul says, God has appointed a day in which He is going to judge the habitable world in righteousness by the Man whom He has appointed, having given the proof of it to all, in having raised Him from among the dead (see Acts 17: 31). He does not present it there as a matter of faith. The moral effect of Christ's work in resurrection requires faith, but it is presented there as a fact. It is interesting the way in which He brings in the idea of choice and selection. I suppose when we see Christ sitting in judgment He will still be food for our souls, will He?

J.McK. It is interesting the reference you make because, although the resurrection was a private matter, the glory of the Father intervened and took Christ from the tomb. No human eye witnessed it, nevertheless, the testimony that it has happened is a public thing. So, even as Christ's crucifixion was public, so also there is a testimony to the fact that He is no longer in death.

D.A.B. That testimony is in those who feed upon Him. He was not seen in public personally, but a factual proof of His resurrection lies in the lives of those who feed on His death and His present position.

J.McK. The unbeliever, however well educated, cannot understand this. How, from a situation so negative publicly, God has turned the whole matter to such rich blessing. Thus in three days they could not explain the riddle. Men are still trying to explain the riddle. They cannot understand the life of a believer because it relates to this great event in which God, in the wisdom of His ways, brought about a basis upon which His whole thoughts in blessing could be realised.

D.E.R. Do we need to carry with us always that the Lord's death was vicarious? I was thinking of the importance of the fact that He had no need to die for Himself.

J.McK. So that it was His initiative that was involved in His going into it. But His death was absolutely necessary if God's thoughts in blessing were to be secured. He Himself was free from any claim in Him sin was not. Satan had no claim upon Him, but if God's thoughts in blessing were to be fully secured, He must go that way.

R.D.P. I was wondering whether, through the faithlessness of the public church, the world at large has learned the terms have they not? - but not the sweetness. The Philistines here had the riddle, the explanation of it, the terms of it, but they were no nearer to the essence of it, were they?

J.McK. They did not understand how it could be that "out of the eater came forth food". The scripture that has been referred to in John 6 shows how the eater has become food. Christ having been into death becomes nourishment to those who love Him. I think these women in John 19 were sustained and strengthened in a position that was so difficult publicly because in some sense they appropriated this food.

E.C.B. In Judges, they could not have understood the explanation any better than the riddle, "What is sweeter than honey, And what stronger than a lion?" (Judges 15: 18). They could not have understood that any better.

R.D.P. Perhaps we also deal in terms; the terms of the death of Christ, and the terms of divine truths are currency to us, but is the essence and the value of them understood by us?

J.McK. I think that is quite a challenge and confirms my thought that we tend to become too technical. Having a desire to be absolutely correct, not to put a foot wrong or a syllable out of place, sometimes results in a dryness that denies the affection and feeling that is proper to those who owe their salvation to this great event.

K.M. Would the honey taken and enjoyed by us help us with our eye-sight? You need good eye-sight to be able to see the truth, to be able to understand the truth, so the taking of the sweetness is vital.

J.McK. That is good. These women in John 19 reached some of the sweetness also because the Lord's action results in new relationships. The Lord's word as to His mother is often dwelt on by us. These were new relationships and the sweetness involved in them was easily traceable to its source at this moment, when, at this point of great extremity, the Lord's initiative came into view in putting Mary and John together. We thank God for those with whom we are in fellowship, but we need to make sure that our fellowship is on the basis of what was reached at this momentous time.

H.A.H. Does what it says in Romans 14 bears on it, "Christ has died and lived again, that he might rule over both dead and living" (v 9), and could subjection to Him make for the affection and life that you speak of?

J.McK. I think so, so that His universal dominion is part of what has been reached by way of His death. When the Lord was here His relationships were largely Jewish; it was therefore necessary that He should die if He was to justify what the scripture testifies of Him, to rule over the whole scene including all the nations.

H.A.H. So that in John 10, as soon as He says, "And I have other sheep ... those also I must bring" (v 6), He immediately refers to His death and the authority He has to lay down His life.

P.M. I was thinking of the reference in Romans 14. Is it not right to say that even the execution of judgment finally will be dependent on the death of Christ?

J.McK. Everything in God's world depends upon it. I think the test of His death bears on the whole of creation. Matthew's account brings it out in the various groups of persons referred to when on Golgotha's hill the Lord Jesus was crucified. Some were affected by what they saw; some were hardened by it. Even those in the tombs were affected by it; many bodies of the saints were raised and went into Jerusalem, a witness to His greatness at the time of such public weakness and humiliation. Clearly it had a universal bearing.

J.R.W. Do you think Paul gives us some explanation of the riddle in the first chapter of Corinthians when He says, "For the word

of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to us that are saved it is God's power" (1 Cor 1:18), and goes on to speak of the weakness of God as being stronger than men (see v 27). Does He give some explanation of the riddle in that chapter?

J.McK. That is interesting. Outwardly it is such a contradiction that God should reach what is so wealthy through conditions of such poverty, weakness, and suffering, but only God can do it. The tremendous fact, and what should impress us today, is that He has done it. So that we can look back at the cross, seeing it as the greatest point of reference in the whole history of time. It is the complete answer to man's condition, but it is also the basis upon which God's thoughts in blessing are reached.

S.H. When Jesus died the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom, God coming out. I was thinking of the immensity of that.

J.McK. So that the Jewish system in all its religious formality was destroyed; all the true character of it was exposed because they had rejected Christ.

P.J.W. When they ask for a sign, He said a sign shall not be given save the sign of Jonas and spoke about the Son of Man lying three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Would that be the answer to all man's wisdom and self-righteousness?

J.McK. It links with what has been said that the Philistine could not in three days answer the riddle, but God in three days and three nights, as Christ lay in the heart of the earth, has answered every question. What a triumphant thing Christianity is!

D.E.B. I sometimes wonder if I give sufficient consideration to the reference in Ephesians 1 as to "the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead" (v 20). It is as though we have some impression of the greatness of the power of God in creation and the sustaining of things in life, but that passage has always seemed to me to indicate the greatest expression of power that there has ever been, or indeed ever will be. The power of God was thus exercised in bringing Christ out of the grave and giving effect to what you are bringing before us.

J.McK. It emphasises the tremendous fact of His having been into death and the prolongation of that condition, three days and three nights. Another has said that the power of God was taxed, that it was, as you say, the fullest and greatest expression of divine power that Christ was raised from the dead.

D.J.H. It is striking that He says that, “he wrought in the Christ”. It seems to emphasise the reality of death and yet as you say the greatness of the power that wrought there in bringing Him out.

J.McK. Yes, not only, by the Christ, but “in the Christ”.

E.C.B. That is the glory of the Father is it not? He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Is not the glory of the Father exhibited in the power in which God wrought in the Christ?

J.McK. Yes, so that the Lord’s request is, “Father glorify thy name ... I both have glorified it and will glorify it again” (John 12: 28). I think “will glorify it again” relates to the resurrection of Jesus, that is He came forth. It was a selective resurrection. But He came forth from death. Those of us who were at Edinburgh will remember a reference to Joshua 4, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth going *through* the Jordan (see v 7). It was pointed out that the people did not go through the Jordan, they went *over* the Jordan; the ark only went through it. So Jesus Himself actually entered death. That, I think, is the context of these four devoted women who were standing by - “by the cross of Jesus stood his mother, and the sister of his mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala”. We have often spoken of this passage and linked it with those who were prepared to take on reproach. Whilst that remains true, I believe this is greater than that. These were persons who had a place for Jesus in their affections, persons who as divinely strengthened were able to have some perception of the greatness of what was proceeding. Man’s rejection was not the greatest thing; the basis was being laid for an eternity of blessing, God’s character was brought out, as Mr Darby says, as nowhere else.

R.W.F. There is room for us to take our stand with the women, is there not?

J.McK. That was my exercise.

R.W.F. It is deliberate. The scripture does not say for how long; it does not imply that it was momentary. They were identified with Him. I wondered whether it is the answer to all coldness, that is there is readiness to identify ourselves with Him at such a point in connection with His death. There is warmth of affection engendered in us towards Him, do you think?

J.McK. Yes, and in Him towards us also, because the Lord saw them. It says, "Jesus therefore, seeing his mother", so that affection in the saints is answered by affection in Jesus Himself. What a precious moment it was when He saw in the midst of all the hatred of those who put Him on the cross, those who stood by.

R.W.F. You have spoken of what is universal - is that not what one might speak of as a universal truth, that where there is even a flickering of affection, the beginning of affection in our hearts for Christ, He acknowledges it?

J.McK. The fact that there are four women is significant. The force and bearing of the death of Jesus is to have universal effect. God will see to it that in the saints there is a representation of what is universal as an answer.

L.A.B. So the vital link between these persons is that they are four persons who love Jesus and somebody whom Jesus loved. That is the vital link that is formed as a result of His death?

J.McK. It is, and that is the vital side of our Christianity. We are not committed to brethernism, but to Christ and we stand related to the great things that God has done for Himself in the death of Jesus. It is very wonderful and should stir us, delivering us from the small thoughts that we sometimes have in making an apology for our Christianity to see that the whole basis of the universe of bliss has been laid here, and we, by faith, come into the gain of what that means.

G.C.B. As has been said, this place is not exclusive; there is room for us. I wonder how it is we come into the place of the disciple

whom Jesus loves.

J.McK. John had the capacity to enjoy affection, not only to give it, but to enjoy it. We are tested as to how much that is true of us. I think it is very precious that the Lord Jesus saw them and He acts in relation to them and from this point they are set in fresh and hitherto unknown relationships.

E.C.B. Would you say a little more as to the counterpart of this for ourselves, because He is not now on the cross. What is the counterpart of these women for us?

J.McK. I think, although He is not now on the cross, the cross remains. There is an abiding and immutable character about it so that we can take our bearings from it.

E.C.B. I think it is an important question because the ability to stand there is something, but He is not there now and never will be again, but Paul says, "But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). Does that enter into this?

J.McK. So that he says, "through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world". It is what defines our position.

E.C.B. There is a hymn:

Beneath the cross of Jesus,
I fain would take my stand

That is obviously written by a pious person and a believer, but He is not there now: nevertheless it is open to us in affection to go where He has been?

J.McK. That is right. In some sense every Lord's Day as we gather for the Supper, we take account of where He has been. As Mr Darby says, 'in a word it is Christ looked at as dead: there is not such a Christ now'. The fact that we begin each week with that memorial is to stir our affections and take us back to this great turning point in God's ways when every question was answered and the whole scene was cleared for God.

E.C.B. Is it not, therefore, important that we bear in mind what you were saying just now, that especially in relation to the Supper itself we do not become technical?

R.W.F. Have you more in mind as to new relationships?

J.McK. No, save to encourage us that our links together should be in the context of what was reached at the cross. The sweetness of the link between these two persons, both of whom were so close to Jesus is an example for us. This is some of the sweetness that came out of the death of Jesus.

L.A.B. Is it interesting that in John's gospel the cross is always viewed as Him being lifted up? I was seeking to link on with what you said. It is something that we can look up to all the time.

J.McK. We have been reminded of what Mr Raven said as to that, that it was not possible that He should die in the place where He glorified God, so He was lifted up out of the earth. God saw to that, that this death was a distinctive one.

R.W.F. It bears on what we said as to the universal aspect, the result of course is the death of Christ. The serpent on the pole was lifted up so that all could see, all could live, so there is a testimony to all men. He can be seen, if they have eyes to see.

J.McK. "When ye shall have lifted up the Son of Man" (John 8: 28), puts the guilt where it belongs, "and I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me", (John 12: 32) puts the emphasis on the Person.

P.M. Would the fact that John took Mary to his own home in that hour give a certain character to the atmosphere of what was proceeding in that circle?

J.McK. The reference to the hour is interesting. Hence freshness of affection is needed as we feed on the death of Christ. The Passover was to be eaten on the same day that it was roast with fire (see Exod 12: 8).

We should speak of chapter 12 and of this woman, Mary of Bethany. The instinct of the work of God in her soul is in marked

contrast to the hostility that was rising amongst the Jews against Christ. She moves in a way that is fully in line with the direction of His own movements. I think this is very precious.

R.H.B. I was wondering whether the sweetness and the food in your first scripture were first of all for Samson. You have spoken of what they are for the saints and there is what he gave to others, but he took of it and ate. Is this expressed here in these persons who made Him a supper?

J.McK. And how precious the result here was to Jesus, "Suffer her to have kept this for the day of my preparation for burial". The day had come for that, and amidst all the hostility this must have been a delight to the heart of Jesus that somebody acted in this way intelligently. Affection for Christ leads to intelligent action. We have often said that, but how true it is. I remember a reading in this city with Mr Roy Hibbert, where he spoke about following Christ with an associated heart. What an attractive thing that is.

E.C.B. Do you think, in regard to Mary here, you could say:

My soul in secret follows
The footsteps of his love?

J.McK. Yes. What we need is hearts that are ready to go along with Him. I was thinking before the meeting of the prayer of Solomon where he says, "Give therefore to thy servant an understanding heart", 1 Kings 3: 9. We need that in the presence of what we are speaking of. Mary acted to distinguish Him at this particular moment.

D.J.H. Can you help as to the reference to burial - "preparation for burial".

J.McK. I think it links with the three days and three nights. She was acting in a way that was entirely different from the Jews around. In their system what was developing was hostility and hatred to Christ: what was welling up in this woman's soul was affection for Him, and she expends the most precious thing she has upon Him.

D.J.H. So that she seems to go the whole way, that is, it is not His death on the cross only, great as that is. One uses the word 'only' very carefully in relation to that, but she goes the whole way of the three days and three nights.

J.McK. So "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment". That was not her objective, but it was a consequence of what she did.

D.A.B. There is quite an emphasis in these scriptures on the household. There is something, in a sense, that underlies what we enjoy in our meetings.

J.McK. That household in Bethany had been through much in the way of experience. From chapter 11, and the deep lessons of it, they had learned that He was the Son of God, and that He was able to raise the dead. Had He simply come in and healed Lazarus, that would have been similar to what He had done elsewhere before, but they were to learn Him in a new way as One who could raise the dead, and that really entered into the fibre and constitution of the family. That is the background of chapter 12.

D.A.B. Six days after this occasion they would have taken the Passover in this house. If you had taken a deep breath at the Passover you would have smelt the sweetness of the ointment, so that it gave character to everything that flowed out of this occasion including the Passover and other things that enter into Christian household life.

J.McK. The purity of this woman's affection we have to wonder at and we are greatly measured by it because there was incorruption in the way that she acted. She took what was costly, she took "a pound of ointment of pure nard". Another has said that she must have had more than the pound, she just took what was appropriate for the occasion. Her heart was full in relation to Christ: she followed Him with an associated heart. If the Jews were acting against Him, she was acting in His favour. What a contrast this is to what Peter says elsewhere, "God be favourable to thee, Lord", Matt 16: 22. He was not in the current of this, he was anxious to avoid the reproach,

and the public shame that the cross involved. This woman is going along with it; because of the work of God in her soul she sees that it was absolutely necessary.

E.C.B. In this gospel she does not appear with the embalming at the cross. For her the matter is concluded here, and you go into the secrets of chapters 13 to 17.

J.McK. So the embalming was left to one who previously came to Jesus by night, Nicodemus.

R.D.P. The note is interesting here, it says 'it was now the time'. It is difficult to understand this as it is several days before the Lord's death, but the note says that the word means, 'it is now the time'. I wondered if that is really on the same line as the riddle, that the believer who is near to Christ understands that the timing is not man's timing; nothing to do with Christ, nothing to do with true Christianity, is man's timing, it is divine timing is it?

J.McK. It is and emphasises the greatness of what was about to happen. It had never happened before, it has never happened since, and she was at this point available to furnish something for the heart of Christ. I think we need to be concerned that in the time of testimony in which we live we are opportunists in this way. If God has given us something in the way of affection that responds to the Man who has done so much for God and so much for us, let us take our opportunities as they arrive. The time of the service of God is a time of wonderful opportunity for what is unprescribed.

S.H. Can we say that we have died with Christ as Paul has set out in the Roman epistle?

J.McK. Scripture says it, so we are safe. We need to have more regard for what scripture says. If Christ has gone out of sight, as a man in flesh, we also have gone out of sight in order that we should realise links with Him in a new condition.

D.A.B. Does what has been drawn attention to apply also to the Lord's return. There is a sense in which it is in the Father's calendar, but is it also determined by the state of readiness among those who

love Him? I was thinking of what Mr Darby said once, if he wanted to know when a rich man was coming back, he would not listen to the gossip in the town, but go and see how ready his household was.

J.McK. I think the Lord's return is another great truth which has a universal bearing. If the death of Jesus has a universal impact upon all, so equally does the moment when that Man returns to take up His rights. It bears on believers, but it bears on unbelievers. How solemn, that the Man whom men have rejected will return to take up universal dominion.

E.C.B. That would be the Son of Man. You had something in mind about the Son of Man.

J.McK. It is referred to in verse 23, "But Jesus answered them saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified". As Son of God His glory had been seen in raising the dead, as son of David there is some tribute to Him in the previous paragraph as He comes into Jerusalem, but if the Lord is to be known as Son of Man, as I understand the truth, it was necessary that He should die. In flesh His connections were Jewish. In Matthew 15 he says, "I have not been sent save to the lost sheep of Israel's house" (v 24). That is that His service – as I understand it - when He was on earth, was largely related to the Jewish nation. But if we think of the dominion accorded to Him in Psalm 8, the universal side of His dominion and rule, to reach that it was necessary that He should die.

E.C.B. I am sure that is right. The finality of the place in which the Son of Man is glorified is in 1 Corinthians 15 when He, "gives up the kingdom to him who is God and Father" (v 24), but it seems to me as if Jesus, in His mind, passes over the whole of the present period here, because the Son of man is not glorified as such publicly now. It is well to keep in mind that John 12 is the close of the public ministry of Jesus, but the display of the glory of the Son of Man according to the Psalm is after the present period, and when in the finality of everything He gives it all up to God.

J.McK. Remedy or penalty does not enter into this section at all, "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone;

but if it die it bears much fruit”.

E.C.B. That is largely what I have in mind in suggesting that in most of John's gospel the death of Jesus is not looked at as sacrificial, “I lay down my life that I may take it again ... I have received this commandment of my Father”, John 10: 17,18. That is not presented as sacrificial; it is closing one door and opening another.

J.McK. So what we are in the presence of here is immensely great, that God has used the death of Christ. Although men, and Satan as impelling them intended other things, God has used it as laying the basis for His eternal thoughts. So “it abides alone”, indicates as we said earlier that there was no corruption in Him. He could have remained alone, but there would have been no complete answer, there would not have been the much fruit. The great results for God have come by way of the public rejection and going out of sight of One who is referred to here as the Son of Man.

R.D.P. It is interesting, this matter of the Son of Man. They say later in the chapter “Who is this, the Son of man?” (v 34). It is as if there was no real knowledge of the Son of Man; the expression had been used but they had no knowledge of it, and then He said “Yet a little while is the light amongst you” (v 35). There was a period of great darkness about to be entered into here, and then it says, “Jesus said these things, and going away hid himself from them” (v 36). This is a ray of glory as to the Son of Man.

J.McK. If He had manifested His glory as the Messiah, which He could have done, or if He had taken up the kingdom, which He could have done because it is His by right, the glory would have been, in a sense, limited, but the glory of the Son of Man is necessarily greater because it is universal.

D.E.B. That is what Stephen saw in the opened heavens, and he gave public testimony to the fact. I was thinking that from that record the Son of Man was there and at that moment He was standing and Stephen gave public witness to the opposers, possibly some of these people were there.

J.McK. In Stephen's testimony there is a public witness to the fact that all is now ready as far as God is concerned for the realisation of His universal dominion.

A.C.S. Does this take us back to your first scripture that death had to come in so that the food and nourishment can be appropriated?

J.McK. It was absolutely necessary. God's greatest thoughts do not relate to this present mortal condition of things, but to the new order of things where Christ is. Even Lazarus, chapter 11, when he was raised from the dead, was simply restored to the condition of flesh and blood. Now, if we have to do with Christ, He is a new condition and if we live on account of Him we find that He is strengthening us in view of our association with Him in a new place.

J.S.G. That really involves eternal life, does it? Do sweetness and food enter into the enjoyment of eternal life, beyond death?

J.McK. I think so, so that we are strengthened for enjoyment and for out of the world heavenly relationships. Christianity is a wonderful thing. I trust nobody here is getting discouraged, because the immensity of what we have in this scripture indicates the preciousness of what God has called us to.

K.M. The death of Christ is the basis of our redemption. It has been said as to Mr Darby, that somebody gave him a rose, and he put the rose in the lapel and the brethren wondered why he had this rose. He said I love the rose because of the Creator, and I love it because it reminds me of my Redeemer, and also I love it because of the person who gave it to me. I was thinking particularly of the fact that what was universal and the question of redemption, even the herbage of the field is included in that.

J.McK. We use the expression, the redeemed universe, and it confirms what you say, that all for God's pleasure is because of what was accomplished when Jesus died.

We should just refer to verse 31, “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out”. This is the solemn side, it is not future, the Lord is pronouncing a judgment that is immediate. Here is another way in which the death of Jesus has a universal bearing. The world is not under probation, it is already judged and it is judged because of what happened at the cross.

E.C.B. I was thinking of a question at the beginning of the reading – “the prince of this world cometh”. He acquired that status as having the might of death, because man knowing that in the day he ate of the fruit he would die, succumbed to the temptation of Satan and therefore gave Satan that power, or put that power into Satan’s hands. The universal bearing of the death of Jesus is brought out peculiarly in this verse in regard to unbelievers.

J.McK. It is. Satan is referred to as the prince of this world until this point. It became abundantly evident that it was so because the Man whom God had sent and the Man who represented the grace of heaven amongst men was totally rejected.

D.J.H. I think it has also been said that the prince of this world is not referred to again. Scripture refers to the god of this world, that is the way that men pursue things as not thinking good to have God in their thoughts; lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, they are given up in that sense to idolatry, but the prince of this world, as it has been said, is not referred to again because he has been cast out.

J.McK. Let us remember this, the prince of this world has been cast out. Publicly. Jesus had been cast out, but what had actually happened was that Satan had been cast out. We need to remember that in the presence of the encroaching influence of the world around us.

E.C.B. Let us hold in our minds “I if I be lifted up will draw all to me”. Is that not blessed!

J.McK. We are drawn to a crucified Christ, One who though rejected of men forms the divine centre of a new scene.

LONDON

18 November 2000

Key to Initials

L.A.Barlow, Bexley; R.H.Brown, East Finchley; D.A.Burr; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; E.C.Burr; G.C Bywater, Buckhurst Hill; R.W.Flowerdew, Sunbury; J.S.Gray, East Finchley; S.Hewison, Dorking; D.J.Hutson; H.A.Hutson; J.McKay, Witney; K.Marshall, Rotherham; P.Martin, Colchester; R.D.Plant, Birmingham; D.E.Remmington, St. Albans; A.C.Stay, St. Albans; J.R.Walkinshaw, Bexley; P.J.Walkinshaw, Gillingham; V.E.Wraighte, Gillingham

SIMPLICITY OF HEART

John McKay

**Acts 2: 46, 47 (with all the people); 1 Corinthians 14: 15, 16;
Philippians 4: 4-7; Matthew 25: 1-13**

I would like to say a word as to the expression in Acts 2, “simplicity of heart”. We live in a world where many things demand the attention of men, ourselves included, and it seems to me that what is lacking in the lives of many is simplicity of heart; simplicity of affection that will seize on what is vital and will hold to it. We spoke in the reading of Mary and I think, in the context of this word, her heart was simple; it was full in relation to the Man of God’s choice. How much of the sorrow and discord around us is caused by divided affections - disintegration of family relationships; aimlessness on the part of those who lack direction in their lives, in a world that is going on to judgment. The believer in the midst of such a scene is to be characterised by simplicity of heart. In Acts 2 this is in the context, not of spiritual things, but of ordinary things. It says, “they received their food with gladness and simplicity of heart”. I put it to you that simplicity of heart will lead to simplicity of life. The Lord has taken to Himself from our area recently two beloved brothers; one of them lived in Worcester and the other in Malvern, both well known amongst the brethren. One of the things that characterised their lives was simplicity, and I believe it flowed from simplicity of heart. There was a directness about their relations with God, they lived in relation to the God they knew, and like Abraham of old, having gone out, they had left other things to follow Christ. They did not have an inheritance here, they were simple as to this world’s affairs. Mr Darby speaks of Abraham as having the heart of a stranger. I wonder what kind of heart you have? Young brethren here, may I ask the question, older brethren too, is your heart simple, is your life simple, is the directness of your link with God, even as to material things, as evident as it should be? What destroys simplicity is man’s intellect and ability. If you read Acts 17 in the city of Athens where man’s education, I suppose, reached somewhat of a zenith, Paul

goes among them and says, "I found also an altar on which was inscribed, To the unknown God", Acts 17: 23. As academic ability shone among them for their own distinction so it resulted in a lack of the knowledge of God. They acknowledged His existence or there would not have been an altar, but they did not know Him. Paul's language amongst them is quite interesting, he speaks about God, "himself giving to all life and breath and all things ... for in him we live and move and exist" (vv 25, 28). Paul was living in relation to the God he knew and living in relation to material things as receiving them from God. Can I appeal to you as to how simple your heart is in relation to the actual affairs of life?

We need to receive creatorial things as giving thanks to the God who is the source of them. As holding all in relation to Him, our lives become simple as in integrity of affection we trace all to the Giver. Such persons are here, not as part of the morass of Christendom, but shining as those who have simple affection for the God whom they have come to know in Jesus, Ps 104: 27.

I have been attracted to this expression in 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul, in the presence of the difficulties and the administrative problems that afflicted the position in Corinth, makes this attractive reference to "he who fills the place of the simple Christian". I wonder if I could ask you whether you qualify for such a description as that, "he who fills the place of a simple Christian"? What would that place be? If you look at other translations of the Bible they are not quite so rich in their expression; one translation referring to the unconverted, another referring to the ordinary person, another to he who takes the place of the unlearned. Mr Darby's translation is very rich, "he who fills the place of a simple Christian". You may say, of course I am a Christian. I ask you do you fill the place? What does it mean to fill the place? Mr Raven's ministry is often quoted, challenging the hearts of the brethren to know where they are and why they are there. I wonder, if somebody asked you such a question, whether you would immediately begin to retail the struggles and the conflicts and the difficulties that have been amongst the saints. Where do you stand? Surely a simple Christian would look back, to the cross

as the great point of reference where everything for God was settled, and look forward to the time when the Man who died on the cross, the Man of sorrows, will come again. These are fixed points we may say in the history of the universe and as rightly related to them he would fill the place that he has in the testimony as one who is a simple Christian. Can I commend such an exercise to you? Can I stimulate desire for this amongst the brethren? Let it not be that you are among those who simply trust in Christ as to the future, who as to foundation are trusting in the shed blood, and yet whose lives as to the content and character of them are lived in relation to things in which Christ has no place.

Is that filling the place of a simple Christian? One who fills the place of a simple Christian is living Christianity; he has his foundation right, he has his heart right, his future is clear and he is here in simple affection for Christ and for the saints. I commend to you the place of a simple Christian.

When we come to Philippians 4 Paul says "Rejoice in the Lord always". Here we have the outlook of a person whose heart is right and rejoicing always marks him. This is testing to me and perhaps to all of us, for in our lives adversity has to be met and problems arise. Only those who are in the secret of what God has accomplished through Christ can be described as rejoicing in the Lord always. Let your gentleness be known of all men. What a change this would effect in our lives. We are not to be here as seeking personal advantage, we are not here to stand for our rights. "Let your gentleness be known of all men". How do the saints know you? How do the saints know me? It would be normal to have a commendation from the brethren. This characteristic however is also to form part of our public testimony. Simplicity of heart would lay a basis in our souls so that we are not assertive as to the things that have no importance. Abraham was not tempted by the patronage of the world because He had a taste for what was better.

We are measured as to how much we live in relation to what is eternal? How much do we live in relation to the realm where Christ is already exalted? We do not yet see all things subjected to

Him, but as Hebrews says, “we see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour” (chap 2: 9), persons who are living in relation to Christ’s present position can afford to yield. “The Lord is near. Be careful about nothing”. What a statement that is! We may profess concern about difficulties that exist among the saints – it is right to carry things, but it is wrong to become burdened by them. “Be careful about nothing” means that you allow divine supremacy in your life, and in relation to the saints. We learn to trust God about His people. There are many who have been diverted from the path of testimony because they have tried to unravel the problems and difficulties of Christendom. Such matters are not our responsibility. Certain things according to the parable in the gospels are allowed to go on to the harvest. It is not man’s responsibility to deal with everything that is seen to be attached to the profession. Let us be careful then, that we act only in areas for which we are responsible, and let us not become obsessed with the burdens of the way. There is so much that is positive to go in for. Let us see that our energies are not wasted on things that really have little significance. “Be careful about nothing”, not of course that you are careless - surely a person who has as their model the Man of the gospels is not going to be careless - but I think what this passage means is that you are not weighed down either by the things of this life or the problems that arise as Satan seeks to spoil what is precious to Christ in the waiting time. “Be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts”. As getting into God’s presence we find that He is not troubled. A believer who is in the secret of God’s presence is tranquil and such a person can impart a sense of peace to any circumstance into which he comes.

Matthew 25 is a passage well known to us. It relates primarily to the Jews, but we can apply it in regard of our own position. The virgins, ten of them, “having taken their torches, went forth to meet the bridegroom”. One of the characteristics of the bridegroom is exclusive affection: there is only one object that can satisfy his heart.

The affection that marks Christ is wonderful in its purity, “the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”, Eph 3: 19. There is only one kind of affection that can rightly respond to the heart of the Bridegroom and that is virgin affection, simplicity of heart. The Spirit of God would develop amongst us unmixed affection that looks for and expects the return of Christ. The consequence of the bridegroom tarrying was that they all grew heavy and slept. In chapter 24 the wicked bondman says, “my Lord delays to come” (v 48), he does not deny that he is coming, but he says, he is delaying to come. It is a question of what is going on in this period. I wonder what is going on in our lives in this present waiting time? What happened here was that they all grew heavy and slept; including those that had oil in their vessels, all of them grew heavy and slept. How measured we are as to our personal committal. Then it says, “But in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him”. You see how the cry brings them right back to the original purpose for which they were called out, “go forth to meet him”. Going forth involves leaving one order of things in view of living in relation to another. I wonder how much we live in relation to the present seen order of things? How measured we are because the earth and its affairs tend to hold us, more than we realise. Mr Darby raises the question as to going to heaven, saying, do you want to go now? Or when do you wish to go? Such questions are very telling, because they bring out the real condition of heart within us, whether we are prepared to relinquish the present material order of things in the light of the fact that the Man of sorrows, the Man who has been to the cross is the Man who is going to return. The whole aim around us in man’s world is to increase possessions and to seek prosperity. God is good to us as to material things but our place of prosperity is elsewhere. The Lord is coming again and the telling word here, the exhortation, yea the command is “go forth to meet him”. The going forth brings out those who were genuine and those who were mere professors. It is sad that there should be those who wearing the cloak of Christianity simply go along with others. The resource of the Spirit is available to sustain what is vital in hearts for Christ right to the end of the dispensation.

There is no reason why we should *not* have what is necessary to complete the course.

The test of the Lord's presence brings out the real condition of things which exists. My appeal today to my brethren is that our hearts may be simple as to the things of God and of Christ. Unburdened as we go through a scene that is darkening all around us, and ready to leave. Rebecca was ready to go, "I will go", Gen 24: 56. Her heart was sustained, not by what she had left, but by what was before her, "Who is the man that is walking in the fields to meet us?", Gen 24: 65. The Lord is coming, blessed be His Name, and He will not fail to answer true hearts who wait for Him.

LONDON

18 November 2000