

SEEING THE LORD JESUS

“Therefore ... let us run ... looking off unto Jesus the author (or captain, or file-leader) and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1,2).

I want to try to gather up and focus the ministry of these messages, taking you back to the beginning and reminding you that we pointed out that the whole Bible, in every part, is concerned with the will of God; which means that, as the Bible is the Word of God, the will of God is only to be found in the Word of God. Then we pointed out that the Bible introduces God to us as a “going” God, a God moving *in* and *with* purpose. He is in action from the first verse: “In the beginning God created” (Genesis 1:1), and all the way through the Bible He is seen to be pressing onward in purpose and revealing Himself, and that purpose, in His Word. So the Word of God has to govern everything if the purpose of God is to be fulfilled and completed.

We moved on to see that, in order to be in that full, comprehensive will of God with purpose, it is necessary for us to have no purpose of our own, and so we dwelt upon the great law of spiritual progress — the law of letting go; the law of renunciation of all unto God. We mentioned three factors for a true beginning:

- (1) That we are supremely concerned to know the will of God;
- (2) That we are quite prepared at least to listen to and consider anything that might help us to know the will of God, being open-hearted and open-minded;
- (3) That we are committed to do what the Lord shows us as

to that will.

That is the point at which we have now arrived, and, as I have said, I want to gather all that up with one other great essential to going on with God.

Caught up in the goings of God

Let me say this: In the presence of such a great deal of misapprehension and inadequate understanding in the world as to what Christianity is, I would say that Christianity really is that persons are caught up in the goings of God. The apostle Paul used the word “apprehended”, and this is what he meant. He had been apprehended of Christ, and Christ was going on, moving forward — and how true that was at that time! In the early days of the Book of the Acts it is so evident that He was a forward-moving Christ. There was a great forward movement from heaven, and this man was caught up, and carried on in that going as one under arrest.

That is what Christianity is. It is not just a little thing. It contains many things, but what it really amounts to is that you and I have been caught up in something; we have been taken hold of. There is a very interesting word in the New Testament which is just this very thing. It comes in the betrayal of Jesus, when the band of people came out to arrest Him, and there is a clause which says: “*And they that had laid hold of Jesus led him away*” (Matthew 26:57). You can see what kind of men they were! They were pretty tough, and to be in their grasp and grip would certainly be something that was not easy to resist. Again, it is the same word as the apostle Paul used when he said: “The love of Christ *constraineth* us” (2 Cor. 5:14), and the word just means that we are taken hold of and irresistibly carried on. There was the woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment for healing, and He said: “Who is it that touched me?” The disciples said: “Master, the multitudes *press* thee” (Luke 8:45). That, again, is the same word. Have you ever been in a mob, a crowd, a multitude that is *going*? There is plenty of that sort of thing today! There is a rushing multitude, and when you get in, what can you do but go? It is no use trying to resist. And Chris-

tianity is just being caught up in the eternal going of the eternal God, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit, and being mastered and irresistibly carried on.

I am very careful that you should get the point, for this is a law of progress. That may seem very obvious, but we need to see the principle of it.

You know the content of this Letter to the Hebrews. What does it do right at the beginning? It gathers up everything of all the goings of God. It gathers up all the previous movements and goings of God — “God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners” — and focuses them in His Son, Jesus Christ — “hath at the end of these days spoken”, not by bits and pieces, not here and there, by divers portions and manners, but focused, concentrated, consummated, fully and finally, “*in his Son.*” Then the writer goes on to tell us what Jesus Christ is, and who He is. This wonderful Christ that is being presented is greater than all the angels, greater than the law, greater than Moses, and greater than everything. Then the writer uses the metaphor of a race, a going. We are caught up in something as in a race, and what is it that is governing this movement, this race, all this energy? “Looking unto *Jesus*” — it is this wonderful Jesus about whom he has been writing. He is the full and consummate embodiment of divine purpose into which we are called and caught up.

What does this say to us? We have used a lot of words, but what does it all mean?

Dear friends, it is a law, amongst the others, of *going*. This Letter is full of phrases such as: “Let us go on”, “let us leave the beginning and go on”, “let us ... let us ... let us be caught up in something that makes us shed every impeding, arresting and hindering thing.” What is it that carries us on? We have seen the Lord Jesus! We have had a vision, not objectively, perhaps, but something has happened in our hearts and Jesus Christ has become the all-mastering, all-controlling and all-absorbing object of our existence. We have *seen* Jesus, and that vision carries us on. What we have seen about Him, what God’s purpose is in Him, what we have seen in Jesus has become a dynamic in our life, and such a dynamic that nothing else matters. “Let us lay aside this”, for this does not matter. “Let us lay aside that ... and

that ... and *that*”, for they are not *the* thing. *This* is it — what we have seen of God’s will, in its fulness, as comprehended in His Son for us. All that He is is for us.

“The sin that doth so easily beset us”

You know, we have not yet really grasped the Lord Jesus. I say that meaningly and knowingly. Oh, how many of our worries would go if only we had seen the Lord Jesus! How many of those delaying, arresting things in our life would go if only we had seen the Lord Jesus! What is it that is holding us back? What is “the sin that doth so easily beset us”? What is it that is slowing us in the race, or even holding us up? “Oh, this terrible, sinful thing that I am! This wretched man that I am! This poor thing, so weak, sinful and faulty. I think about this, I dwell upon that, and what happens? I stop running! All the “go” goes out of my being!”

You stop and think about yourself for five minutes, and see how fast you will run forward in the Lord! Oh, yes, we all do it. We are overwhelmingly obsessed with this terrible, poor, miserable thing that we are! We dwell upon it, and then we flop down — and the race is at an end for us while we are there. We have not seen the Lord Jesus!

In Him we have been dismissed. In His death we have been put out of sight. In Him risen we no longer appear before God, for He appears for us as us. He *is* us. *That* is seeing Jesus! If only we could get hold of that! If only we could get hold of Him! If only our eyes really did see what God has made Him to be for us — “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom from God” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Not dwelling upon our own foolishness and folly, but “unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” What more do you want? That comprehends everything in redemption and unto glory! “Looking *off* unto Jesus.”

Do you see what I am trying to say? The writer of this Letter to the Hebrews sees us as in a race, and he says that if we are going on in this we have to see Jesus, and keep Him always in view; not by seeing ourselves and other people all the time, but keeping our eye on Him. Then we will keep going, but if we do

not keep Him in view, then we will stop going.

That is very plain, very simple, but it is the Gospel concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Vision essential to progress

You and I, dear friends, individually, and if we belong to a company of the Lord's people, that company, will only make progress toward that full, ultimate end of God in Christ if we have a spiritual vision of Jesus Christ. Vision is essential to progress. Is it necessary for me to stay with the word "vision"? I am not thinking about something objective that you see with your eyes of flesh. It is something that has happened inside of you, and your inner spiritual eyes have been opened. You can say: "I have *seen*, and that has revolutionised my life. That has put me on my feet. That has set me on a course. That has become a dynamic in my life which, *in spite of myself*, keeps me going." Yes, thank God, it works like that. I know the aspect, the factor, of our responsibility, but God help you and me if it is all going to be left to our responsibility and what we do! I tell you — and this may have been your experience, or it may interpret your present experience — many, many times I would have given up the race. That is an awful confession! Indeed, many times I have given it up in my heart. It became so difficult that I could go no further, so I gave up. It was not, therefore, my persistence that enabled me to go on, but what the apostle calls "the power that worketh in us". What is that? The Holy Spirit has put a dynamic in us and we have *seen*. We cannot un-see! We cannot go back. The seeing may fade, and it may even be eclipsed by days of darkness and trouble. We may know what Paul meant when he said: "We were pressed out of measure, beyond our strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life" (2 Corinthians 1:8). That was a terrible thing for the greatest of all apostles to say! What happened? Did Paul give up and say: "Well, I cannot go on!"? No, not at all! "The power that worketh in us" got him on his feet again and again. Let Elijah seek out his juniper tree and say: "Take away my life!", but the Lord does not agree. He has given Elijah a part in his great, eternal purpose, and so he will come up again.

Be encouraged! Are you down? Are you despondent? Are you despairing? Are you feeling you cannot go on? You will come up again, for something has taken place. I am calling it “vision”, but that may be misleading. What I mean is that something has come into our life which is a spiritual knowledge and has become a spiritual dynamic, giving us a sense of purpose, God’s purpose. It is something that God has done, and that is going to be the secret of our survival, at least. But for that we will not survive. We will not get through on any resource of our own, but we will go on in the going of the eternal goings of God if there has been this initial seeing of God’s purpose in Jesus Christ.

Oh, I do wish with all my heart that in the preaching of the Gospel to the unsaved the note of the eternal purpose was more often struck! The Gospel is generally presented from the point of view of what we are going to get. The appeal is to our souls, that we will have something that will make us happy. That is the whole set-up: being happy! No, you will not get much of a Christian by that means, but you will if those who have come to the Lord have come because they have seen something of the greatness of Jesus Christ, and of their calling in Him; if they have had this vision which has produced a sense of vocation, a sense of mastering purpose. Without that we will not get very far in the race! It is that which the apostle means, though he speaks in symbolic language. Do not just dwell upon the literal idea. The spiritual motivation is “looking off unto Jesus”, who started it and will finish it. He is the author, the file-leader, and the perfecter. It did not begin with us, thank God! How many times we have been rescued by that word of the Lord Jesus: “You did not choose Me. I chose you. *I* initiated this thing and I will complete it, if you will let Me, if you will fall in to this going, if you will keep your eye on Me, and off the things that delay and arrest this vision” — or whatever word you may use for the idea, the principle, the law, this something that has taken hold of you, and you know it is that which is carrying you on.

Have you got that? Are you a Christian of that sort? I am not asking you if you had a Damascus Road experience, when the whole thing was visual, ocular and sensational, but whether something has happened so that, if you wanted to put it into

words, you would say: "I have come to see Jesus Christ, and in Him my eternal destiny has been bound up." Do you see what I mean, what I am trying to say? A mastering motivation has been brought into us, and upon us, by Jesus Christ at the beginning that will make us Christians that go on in this race with patience. Have you got a mighty, divine imperative in your life?

I wish I could get this home! After all your troubles, trials, temptations and difficulties, are you prepared to give up, to abandon everything and say: "I am not going on with this any longer!"? Well, sit down and try! I venture to say that you will not get very far with that! You may have two or three miserable days over it, but sooner or later you will say: "It is no use; I have to go on!" That is what I mean by vision — this sense of a God of purpose having laid hold of us to carry us on.

This is exactly what is meant by inspiration. The Lord's people ought to be inspired people, which is only another way of saying "inspired". And, because of that, they ought to be an inspiration to others. Oh, if we are not an inspiration to others there is something seriously lacking in the very nature of our Christianity! If we cannot inspire others, if we cannot bring in inspiration in our ministry and our contacts, in our leadership, then that is a contradiction in terms, because the idea in the Bible of leadership is inspiration, inspiring people. If you are leading a meeting you ought to inspire people, in whatever kind of meeting it is.

And what should be true of the individual should also be true of every company. They should be a company of people who are being carried on by this mighty divine dynamic of purpose, or vision. "We *know* where we stand. We *know* where we are going, and what we are after." Many of the Lord's people today do not seem to know where they are going, or where they are. No assembly ought to be like that! They ought to be a "going" company, and everybody ought to know that those people have seen something and are mastered by something that is carrying them on, something that is a real force in their being.

Vision essential for unity

Such a vision has many side-effects and values, one of which is the resolving of the whole question of unity. And what a question that is! I hardly know what to say and what not to say, for there is so much. Take up the first Letter to the Corinthians, and what have you there? People with internal dissensions, divisions and quarrellings, and anything but unity and oneness. Paul knew it well before he went to them, and so he said: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). To him that was the one unifying thing — a focused vision of Jesus Christ and His Cross.

If you have this what I am calling "vision", this dominating sense of purpose and meaning given by the Lord, it will resolve so much of this trouble manifested in divisions and lack of real fellowship. A vision of Jesus Christ is a unifying dynamic.

We go to the Old Testament for an illustration. Take the case of Nehemiah. Nehemiah had a vision. He was a man of vision. He saw Jerusalem rebuilt, with the wall reconstructed and made complete. He had a vision of this new Jerusalem on the earth for that time, and he was a man who was tremendously mastered by his vision. Then all these poor people — and they were a bedraggled remnant! — came back, with all the possibilities of more disintegration, murmurings and quarrellings to hinder the realisation of this thing that had mastered this man. But what? They shared his vision! They were gathered up into it. They met persecution, opposition, and everything that could deter them, but the verdict was: "The wall was finished ... in fifty and two days" (Nehemiah 6:15). Why? Because the people had a mind to work. And what was that mind? Well, it was this vision of the purpose which had been put into the heart of this man and which unified the people. Let the devil come along and do everything that he can to discourage and make difficulty! He even tried the subtle ruse of trying to get Nehemiah to come and have a conference in order to discuss things. "No!" said Nehemiah, "Not on your life! I am doing a great work and I will not come down there." You see the power of a mighty objective, a vision, to unify, to energise, to keep going? Do we not need that? Does not Christianity need that? Do we not need it in our assemblies? We do indeed need something like that, so we must have this new apprehension of God's purpose and will as cen-

ted in His Son concerning us, a mighty, animating power in life that is (as I have said and want to say again) more powerful than all our capacity for giving up and being discouraged and resigning. It is more powerful than all the weaknesses of our own souls.

Oh, I do thank God for survival! That is a weak word, I know. It is not enough to say that we survive, for we are doing more than surviving, but in order to survive all this that is against us, there must be something more than ourselves. The Word says: “God is greater than our heart” (1 John 3:20), and we have proved that many times. Our hearts have fainted and wellnigh given up the struggle, but He is greater than our hearts.

Vision an emancipating power

This thing, call it vision or what you will — you know what it means now! — is a mighty emancipating power. I use that word in this sense: it is a great power for lifting us out of our smallness, our narrowness, our littleness.

In illustrating this we will take up our good friend who supplies us with so much instruction in this matter in his own history, the apostle Paul. You know that the cause of the old Israel’s calamity, first of all of being sent into Babylon and captivity for seventy years, and then eventually being dismissed by God, was because of exclusiveness. There is no other answer. “We are *the* people. The truth will die with us. No one else has any place at all. We are it, and only we are it. These nations, the Gentiles, are mere dogs. There is no place for them in the divine economy! We are the chosen people, God’s elect, and no one else.” This was in spite of all the prophecies of what they were meant by God to be to the Gentiles, to the nations. They were to be the seed in which all the nations were to be blessed, but in spite of that covenant with Abraham, they had closed in on themselves until they were the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. It was exclusiveness, and Paul the apostle was a representative of that. He was born and brought up in that, trained in it, imbibing it from his childhood. He was an embodiment of that pharasaic exclusiveness. What are you going to do with a man like that? Try argument, and see how far you will

get. He will out-argue you! Try persuasion. No, not a bit of it! He is not the kind to be persuaded. He is a bigot in this! Try persecution. It makes no difference. You will not move that man! He is shut in to this exclusive position — but the thing is done. He is emancipated, and the old Israel is no longer his parish. The *world* is his parish. How vast is the range of his vision now! You cannot cope with his language about this! He leaps over all language barriers because of what? *He has seen Jesus Christ!* He had a vision, and not only has he seen Him in the incident of the vision of a Person, but he has seen the significance. He has seen what Jesus Christ means in God's universe, in God's economy, in God's goings from eternity to eternity. You cannot be exclusive if you have seen Jesus Christ! That would dissipate and ruin all exclusiveness. You cannot be mean, contemptible and small if you have seen Jesus Christ!

Do you not agree with me when I say that this presentation of Christ in His infinite greatness is the only way to emancipate people from their littleness in their spiritual life? Is that not needed today? Oh, indeed it is! It is unifying, because we have one central Object which draws us together and makes us say to about one-thousand-and-one things that would hinder: "You get out of the way! We are set upon this purpose of God, and we are going on." It is unifying, emancipating and enlarging. Oh, that the Lord would give us this emancipation again, and enlarge us! The Psalmist says: "I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psalm 119:32), and enlargement of heart will make you fleet of foot in the ways of the Lord.

Vision the great battleground

Vision is the great battleground of all time. Oh, if you have seen you will be a marked person. If your eyes have been opened you will know something of what that fellow knew when the Lord opened those eyes that had been blind from his birth. It is all so true to life! He had his eyes opened and said: "Whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). "This one thing I know, and you cannot rob me of that!" But it was not long before he was excommunicated from the synagogue. He was cut off and made

an object of the Pharisees' spite.

That is true to spiritual experience. If you have seen you are in the battle. You will not be troubled very much by the devil if you have not got this dynamic in you, because it is this dynamic which spells his final overthrow. You have to count for God, and you only do so by having seen; and when you have seen you are marked, and there is a battle on. Anything to destroy you, to get you out of the race and out of the battle will ensue!

How are we going to end? What are you praying? I will tell you what I am praying! After all these years I am praying with all my heart: "Lord, reveal Thy Son in me more than ever. Give me yet a larger apprehension and comprehension of the meaning of Jesus Christ!" Will you go and pray that? Will you seek the Lord continually that He will enlarge and strengthen your apprehension of Jesus Christ so that, figurative language or not, this is what it is in actuality: "Looking off unto Jesus, all that He means, all that He contains, all that He represents of God concerning us, the File-leader, the Perfecter, the Completer, the Beginning and the End." Pray that Christ seen in the heart becomes this dominating power in our lives which saves us from all that would bring us into despair.

"I have seen the face of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside!"

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THE WORD, THE WORK AND THE WORLD

(A message given to young Christians in October 1970)

I have been wondering if I could define and sum up your conference in three words, and I think I have them: the Word, the Work and the World. We are going to speak a little about these, but first we will read some fragments of Scripture.

“And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us” (John 1:14). The word “tabernacled”, which is used in the margin of the English Revised Version, is the correct translation here.

“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come” (Matthew 24:14).

I am going to re-translate that verse into what is perhaps a more literal and true translation:

“This good news of the sovereign reign shall be preached in the whole world to set the evidence.” We will come back to that later.

“This is the sum of the things for the tabernacle, even the tabernacle of the testimony” (Exodus 38:21).

1. The Word

We begin with the Word, because that is the basis of everything.

Everything must be according to the Word, out from the Word, and

governed by the Word. The Work, which comes next, is the purpose, or expression, of the Word. Then comes the World, which is the sphere in which the Word has to have its expression.

Perhaps I should say that I am treating you as a group of

students and am not preaching to a congregation, so I am expecting that you will follow quite closely every word that I say, for I am weighing up my words very carefully and there is a great deal more behind them than there seems to be on the surface.

As far as the Word is concerned — and I am now referring to the Scriptures — we must always look at any fragment of Scripture in its wider context. Do remember that, when you come to read any part, any sentence, even any single word of the Scriptures, because it is the Word of God it has a much wider context than the thing itself. It is not just a word, or a sentence, or a verse, or a portion of Scripture, in itself. It has a much greater setting, and you will be greatly helped, and it will be of really vital consequence, if you can see that wider context. In other words, look for the fuller content of any part of the Scripture, for it has much more in it than lies on the surface. There is an inexhaustible depth in anything that proceeds from God. Indeed, if it is true that the Bible, the Scriptures, are God-breathed, inspired of God, coming out of God, then they are as full as God Himself. There is not a little mind behind that word, that sentence, that statement or that argument. It is God's mind, and that mind is inexhaustible. You will never fathom its depths, but it is there in every fragment.

Please try to remember that when you are reading the Word of God. Do not just read on and on, but take it fragment by fragment and seek to see both its wider context and its fuller content.

That is not just technical. I am speaking to you as one who has been with this Word of God for over sixty years, and I have found this to be of immense value. You see, the Bible has been preached and taught for some two thousand years now, but at the end of that time there is still something new to be found in just a fragment, as far as words are concerned. Take any one of these texts, so-called, on which people preach. You may have heard hundreds of messages on it, and if you are as old as I am, you will have heard preaching on it many times in many parts of the world, but, you know, it is never exhausted. There is always something new and fresh about that well-known bit of Scripture. How often we hear someone get up and announce his text, and

our reaction is: “Oh, we know that one! We have often heard people talk about that one!” but, if the person speaking is really under the anointing, before he or she is through we have got something quite new on that old, well-worn bit of Scripture which we have heard so many times before. I am enunciating something of tremendous importance. This that comes out from God, is as big as God Himself, and can you exhaust God? Can you really get to the end of God’s mind? Never! Indeed, after all our years, however many they may be, we are saying to ourselves: “Well, when I get to glory I am going to ask for an explanation of that bit of Scripture that I have known so well. I am going to ask Paul what he meant by that statement, and the Lord what He meant by that one. I know there is something more there that I have not been able to fathom.”

I need not labour this, but I want to stress, first of all in relation to the Word, that its depth and its fullness are quite inexhaustible because it comes from God, and therefore it is as full as God Himself.

We are going to take an example. Our first passage was John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us.” The Greek word “logos” is used, so we have: “And the Word, the logos, became flesh and tabernacled among us.” Let us break it up. “The Word, the personal expression of God, *became* flesh” — not “always was”, but *became*, and that is a point, a time in eternity. We do not know when it happened exactly in the mind of God, but, of course, we know the date in history. But there was a juncture, a crisis, a terminal point between the pre-existence of the Word which was God in the beginning and His becoming flesh — “and *tabernacled* among us.” As I have already said, that is the correct translation, for that same word is used many times in the Scriptures. The last time is in the book of the Revelation: “The tabernacle of God is with men” (21:3).

Now we begin to open out. John is writing his Gospel with a full Jewish background, and I suggest that you get down to that Gospel and track down carefully every allusion to the life, history and constitution of Israel. You will have to search very closely, but you will find that it is all there. Where does he begin? “... and *tabernacled* among us.” “He took up His residence

in a tent.” The Greek word cannot be exactly translated into English, for it would sound too awkward if I said: “and entented among us.” You see, John is right back with Israel in the wilderness where we read of “the tabernacle of the testimony”. The tabernacle is in John’s mind, for it is part of this whole Jewish system which lies behind all that he is writing. He has a lot to say about the system, and you will find that he speaks about the manna in the wilderness, and Jacob’s well. Yes, it is all there.

John has this whole Jewish life and constitution at the back of his mind as he is writing, and he begins with the tabernacle. In effect, what he is saying, or meaning, is that what the tabernacle in the wilderness was long ago, Jesus is now. He has supplanted that tabernacle. It is dismissed and He has taken its place. The great transition has taken place. Presently the temple will come up in the same way with the woman of Samaria: “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship” (John 4:20). Jesus said: “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.” What has happened? Mount Gerizim, the temple of the Samaritans, has been dismissed, and the great temple in Jerusalem has been dismissed. Someone has taken their place. Well, as I have suggested, read through this Gospel again and mark as many of the allusions to Israel’s life and history as you can.

We return to the tabernacle. First of all, God commanded: “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8), so the object of it was: “that I may *dwell* among them.” This is the same word again, although it is in Hebrew, and God was really saying: “that I may *tabernacle* among them.”

Then look at the making of this tabernacle. It is a revelation from heaven, and nothing whatever is left to the inventiveness or judgment or thought or imagination of man. The pattern is given in the Mount, and you notice the meticulous and scrupulous exactness of God over this. “According to all that I shew thee, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it” (Exodus 25:9). Nothing was left to man. Man, with all his imaginative, emotional, intellectual capabilities, is ruled out, set aside. He has no place in the mak-

ing of this tabernacle. God is very particular, so much so that when two of Aaron's sons made incense which was not according to the prescription, it was called "false fire". It was not according to the prescription given by God, so He came down and you know what happened. It meant complete destruction, the obliteration of everything in this connection that was not God's thought or mind, but was of *man*.

Why this very stringent jealousy of God over this tabernacle? Because His thought does not begin and end with this thing called the tabernacle. His thought is so much bigger, fuller and greater than anything that can be measured. And what is God's thought? Nothing less and nothing other than His own Son, Jesus Christ, and every detail of this tabernacle in the wilderness symbolically, and of the Person in incarnation actually, is meticulously according to God's mind. This is the One who came and tabernacled. There is a detailed, scrupulous correspondence with the mind of God, and that was what was governing the tabernacle in the wilderness. In God's intention, mind and thought that tabernacle was an expression, a representation of the Lord Jesus in His character and nature.

That is the fuller content of: "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." So, you see, we cannot just go on reading the Bible on and on! We have to get this fuller, wider context, and the far greater setting of each fragment.

Well, that is the Word, and remember that you cannot go on with the Work until you have got that, because there is so very much that is of man's conception, genius, idea, imagination and activity in the things of God, but God is not dwelling in all that. He is not there, for the very object has been lost or missed. To put that in another way: If God is going to come in, tabernacle, reside, be present, everything must be according to Christ. How meticulous Christ was Himself about that! He had His Father's mind, and here in John 5 you will hear Him saying: "The Son can do nothing *out from* himself". That is what the Greek says, not "of himself". You see how you have to weigh every little word! What is coming out from us? "The Son can do nothing out from himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner" (verse 19). "The works that I do, I do not out from My-

self. The words that I speak, I speak not out from Myself. It is the Father that speaketh, and it is the Father that doeth the works.” He is in touch with the ultimate thought of God in every detail. Was God in Christ? Has history proved that God came in through that One? Well, you have the answer to that.

That is the Word, which governs and is the basis of everything, but we must go on.

2. The work

What is the work of God? You, of course, are very concerned about the work of God. Now, please do not quote me out of context. You are concerned with the salvation of souls, and that is quite right, *but* ..., and when I put a “but” in it means that there is a question. You are concerned with the spreading of the Gospel. Quite right, *but* ... What are you concerned with? I’m sure you can make a list of answers to that question. Why are you here at all? Why are you a Christian? Why are you going out to the various places to which you are going? Perhaps you would comprehend it all in this one sentence: “I am going out in the work of the Lord. I have committed myself and my life to the work of the Lord.” Please, what do you mean? These answers that you will give may be quite right as far as they go, and yet this “but” is there, and it is a very challenging “but”. It might be a very devastating “but”, for it might put us right out of our work. It might be a “but” that causes the Lord to lay us aside from His work for a time. This “but” may account for so many things.

What is the work of the Lord, dear friends? Will you take this to heart? Again, please do not say that I have said: “The work of the Lord is not to preach the Gospel, and not the salvation of souls”, for I have said: “Yes, it is” to those. These are means, but they are not the end. They are the means to an end. What is the work of the Lord? What does our passage of Scripture indicate?

“The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us.” Why did Jesus Christ come into the world in the flesh? To save men? Yes. To bring men to God? Yes. To make known the Kingdom of God? Yes. But is that all? Are those ways, or are

they the end? Again, I ask the question: What is the work of the Lord?

The work of the Lord is to bring God into His place in this world. That is all. In your being where you are, in your being a Christian and a servant of the Lord, in your preaching the Gospel or in your doing any of these things which make up the sum of your work, the challenge, the test is this: Is God present? When we meet one another, do we meet the Lord, or do we meet an enterprise, an undertaking, a piece of work, an organisation, or a lot of people interested in a *thing*? Is the presence and the impact of our life the impact of God upon a situation?

Let us come to our passage in Matthew 24: “This good news of the sovereign reign shall be proclaimed in every nation in order to *set the evidence*”. In the Greek, the word is “testimony”, or “witness”, and you know what a witness is — one who has a testimony. In no court of law anywhere will the judge allow you to say: “Now, I *heard* this. I *was told* that. I *believe* that it was so and so. I *read* it.” To that the judge will say: “My dear man, I do not want to hear what you heard, what you think, what you believe or what you read. I want first-hand evidence. Reading and hearing is second-hand and I do not accept that as evidence.” Do you not think that this is challenging where our witness, our testimony is concerned? The fact that you are in a situation is evidence of what? “This good news of the sovereign reign proclaimed in all the nations to set the evidence” — and of what is the evidence? That this earth is God’s by right. “This earth, and this patch upon which both my feet stand, is God’s, and not the devil’s, nor man’s. It is God’s by right of creation and by right of redemption.” If you take that position you have God on your side.

That has been the battle all the way through. It began when Abel took the position with an altar, testifying that this earth is the Lord’s by right, not only of creation (Cain got as far as that!), but of redemption, by right of precious blood. And the devil came out and slew him — and yet, did he? “He being dead yet speaketh” (Hebrews 11:4).

We come to Noah. By this time the whole creation has been wiped out, except for those few in the ark. Then they came out, emerging from judgment, death and destruction, and the first

thing that Noah did was to build an altar upon the regenerated, renewed earth. In so doing, he said: "The earth is the Lord's." Men had robbed God of His place. The imagination of every heart was evil and men would not have God in their thoughts, so He said: "That is not what I created the world for. I created it for Myself, for *My* dwelling and tabernacling." So Noah put up an altar and there the Lord's rights were recognised.

Abraham went up and down the land, and wherever he put his feet he built an altar, and in so doing he was saying: "This belongs to God. His rights of creation and redemption are represented here."

We think of Moses. Israel came out to be constituted a nation by way of an altar, which was constructed on the threshold of every dwelling, for that was where the lamb was slain. From the basin which caught the blood of the lamb on the threshold a circle was made, which meant that that home and that family were encircled with blood, and out through that circle of blood they emerged as God's nation. It was by way of an altar. They may not have understood all this, but the meaning was: "We are the *Lord's!* We are redeemed by precious blood. The Lord's rights are recognised and acknowledged by our very existence, for all the first-born of the Egyptians have died. Our survival is on the ground of redeeming blood, for we are the Lord's."

You go on through the Old Testament, and all these altars were leading up to the great altar of the Cross which included, comprehended them all with one inclusive, comprehensive meaning. What was the battle of Calvary? Well, you can say many things about it — atonement for our sins, and so on — but all that is included in one thing: the rights of God in this world were being fought out in the Cross. You are not surprised, then, that when that battle has been fought, the cosmic forces against God having His place have been stripped off and the battle of God's rights has been settled by redeeming blood, the next great event in the history of this world is that heaven opened and down came the Holy Spirit to tabernacle in the church, the new tabernacle of God, the corporate Body of Christ. God is here, and now the work of God is to set the evidence, that is, to bring the Lord into His place.

Sometimes you can do no more than stand. Many of the

Lord's servants have been able to do nothing more than just stand where the Lord put them, "withstand, and having done all, to stand". Sometimes they are not able to preach, not able to do what they call the work of the Lord. Let us get that straightened out, for sometimes to be unmovable and stand for God's rights in a place is the greatest service that we can do for the Lord.

Well, this ought to revolutionise our idea of the Lord's work! What is it? Much more ought to be said, but it is simply bringing the Lord in where we are.

I expect you have principles that you have been enunciating in this conference and at other times, but this is one upon which I want to put an emphasis. The principle of this work of God is a corporate principle, and no one worker ought to be left alone. The minimum requisite of the New Testament in the work of God is two. Be careful about isolating yourself, detaching yourself. The devil will make a mess of you and the testimony if he can get you isolated. This standing together is a representation of the principle of the Body of Christ, and Paul said that the body is not just one member. Always watch this corporate principle, because sometimes, if we have not got another alongside to stand with us, we will go under. We need one another to stand together.

This is devastating and challenging. It says to me continually: "Does it work out that the result of your being here, as a Christian, as a so-called servant of God, is more of the Lord? Because you have come this way, because you have been here, does it mean that there is more of the Lord?" Oh, how much we can be taken up with what we call the work, and the Lord is expressed so little! That is why I said that the Lord Jesus was so meticulous and scrupulous in seeing that everything was according to the mind of God. Take that to heart!

3. The world

The testimony of God and His sovereign rights — which is only another way of speaking of the Kingdom — are to be planted in every nation. It is not that every nation is to be saved in its entirety in this dispensation, but the testimony is there to set the evidence in all the world.

That, of course, will open the door for a lot more to be said — and my time has gone! But why was that tabernacle in the wilderness right at the centre of a nation? What was it for? And if you look at the terrible tragedy of Israel, why were they set aside, why have there been these two thousand years in which they have been in what the New Testament calls “the outer darkness”? It was because their testimony in the nations broke down. They were raised up, constituted and governed by God and by heaven in order that in the nations it should be known that God has the rights in this world, by creation and redemption. Israel’s presence was meant to be, in effect, the presencing of God. So, when the purpose is lost the thing is dismissed. God will have no more use for an enterprise when its purpose is lost and He will dismiss it. And the purpose is the bringing in of Christ. That was the history of Israel, and it is the history of many things in which the Lord manifested Himself, but which eventually lost the purpose of their existence. They went out on other lines and other things, and have been dismissed by God, like the tent in Shiloh, which became an empty shell, and like the temple in Jerusalem, wrecked and ruined, and dismissed from God’s purpose, for its object was lost.

Shall we pray: “Lord, don’t let that happen to me! Don’t let the thing for which You have brought me to Yourself lose its purpose and I no longer bring You in. Does my presence mean Your presence?” Let us pray like that, for there must be the impact of God.

That is the Word, that is the Work, and that is what we are in the World for. You are going to be scattered among the nations, and what are you going to do? You will preach; yes, it has to be proclaimed. You will labour, you will suffer and you will be very busy, I am sure, but remember this: There must be that life in secret with God which means that when you come out from the sanctuary, the secret place with God, the presence of God is with you and registering just where you are, and if men are insensitive, the devil won’t be! He knows where the Lord is. He is the arch-enemy of God and of God having a foothold in this world. He is the prince of this world and is not going to tolerate any interference with his kingdom without a fight.

Yes, bringing the Lord in has been a battle all the way

through, but this is the work of the Lord, and this is what we are here for.

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