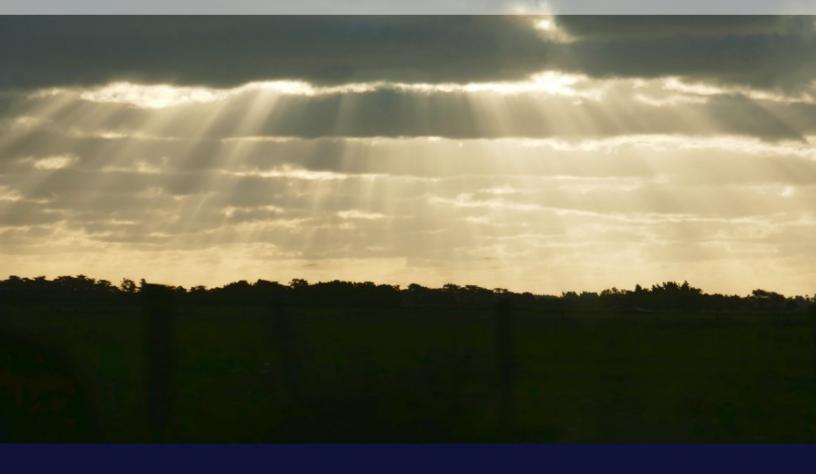
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Born From Above



T. Austin-Sparks



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Born From Above

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Introductory Word

1. The Need of the Assurance of Reality

When we come together as the Lord's people, I am not sure that we come with any clearly defined idea of the object of our coming together. We come because we are aware of spiritual need and desire to know what the Lord may wish to say to us. Our coming is governed very largely by general feelings and thoughts, but I think it is helpful if we just pause to try to define for ourselves the object of gathering; setting the whole matter out. I think I would suggest to you that it may amount to this.

Firstly, we have a sense in our hearts that we desire and need to realise the practical reality of that into which we have come as Christians, that we are not occupied just with theories, teachings, ideas, doctrines, but that the things with which we are concerned, the things in which we find ourselves, are very real things. The assurance of reality is one of the basic things in our hearts related to coming together. There are so many conflicting voices, so many conflicting things in the world that create a sense of uncertainty, and even among Christians there are so many dividing ideas and conceptions that the heart does sometimes cry out: is it all true, is it all real? Even while we know very deeply down reality and truth, we feel the need of having our hearts constantly established and confirmed in the truth. That is one thing. I think you will grant me that that does so far define our purpose in coming together.

2. The Need to Understand More Fully the Nature of Christian Life

We want to know and understand more clearly and fully the nature and the measure of that into which we have come as Christians. What does it all mean? What does it all amount to? What is the nature of all this with which we have come into contact in being brought into relationship with the Lord Jesus? And what are the ranges, the measurements of it? And I would say over against that that Christianity has been made a very much smaller thing than it really is, a very much lesser thing than it really is, and there is not an adequate apprehension of the nature of this great thing which we call Christianity or I would rather say, this great Person: Jesus Christ. We want to know the meaning and range of it all, and to be quite sure this is something not by any means as small as it is often made to appear, and as Christian measure, as we know it, seems to say that it is. I mean by that that we are so often painfully impressed with the smallness of Christianity as represented by Christians, and that the nature of Christianity, as we see it and know it speaking generally, in Christians, is not really good enough - as we know it in ourselves. We want to know whether that is all, whether that is as far as it goes.

3. The Need to Understand the Ways of God With Us

And then there is a third thing which I think comes very near to our hearts. We want to know the meaning of the ways of God, that is, the dealings of God with us. We are aware that we are caused to traverse strange ways, difficult, perplexing paths, that our lives are often very much hedged up with difficulty, perplexity, suffering, problems; that Christian life is not just an easy-going sort of thing. When you become a Christian, you have much of inestimable value and worth beyond all the values of the world, yet you realise that you come into a realm where things become difficult, in many ways problematic. You find that, in the hands of God, things are not easily understood, and the cry of the heart is for a knowledge of the meaning of God's mysterious and strange ways with us.

Am I right in saying that if we were to seek to define the object of Christians meeting together, those three things would at least have a place? Well then, let us believe that the Lord wants to meet us along those lines, to enable us unto this threefold understanding and enlargement: that we are in a great reality, not theory; that what we are in as God's children, as God's people, is of immense and deep significance, and that there is an explanation to the ways of God with us. I believe that the Lord would come to us at this time along those lines.

So this introductory word is intended to try and focus our thoughts and our hearts, to bring us from just a general coming together and waiting to see what may come. What are we after? What do we feel to be the need? Having suggested that those three things are our need, let us look definitely for the Lord's answer along those lines.

Chapter 1 - The Earthly and the Heavenly Man

What I am going to do may seem a very unusual thing, that is, speaking on the basis of that which is almost exclusively used for the unsaved. "Jesus said... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born from above (RV, margin), he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Of course, originally as here, they [the words] so apply, but I am remembering that John wrote this many decades after the incident. The old man, the apostle who outlived all the other apostles wrote this, and went right back to this early time, and wrote it not for the unsaved, but for the church.

John's writings are undoubtedly for the church, and he wrote for the church: "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God", I do not mean, of course, that he said to the church that it had to be born again, but he was laying down something of primary importance for Christians. You notice that I have changed to the actual text - "Except a man be born again" - is the Authorised; "born anew" the Revised; but it is actually "born from *above*", because the word here is the same word as in verse 31 - "He that cometh from *above* is above all". It is the same Greek word: "born from *above*". I have said that it is an unusual thing to address Christians upon that basis, but the fact is that, in one way or another and in varying degrees, the whole of the New Testament is about that which is born from above, the nature of it, what it is, what it does, how it should behave and everything else. That is a sweeping statement, but it will stand investigation.

So we are going to read a section and dismiss this very unfortunate chapter division. We have to refer to it for convenience sake, but you will see how unfortunate it is. We go back into what is verse 24 of chapter 2 and go on to verse 13 of chapter 3.

"Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man. Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto Him by night, and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that Thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born from above. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things and ve believe not, how shall ve believe if I tell vou heavenly things? And no one hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man, who is in heaven."

Two Men - The Earthly and the Heavenly

Now, in that section, we have two persons face to face, an earthly person and a heavenly Person. One word is used of them both, the word 'man'. "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man. Now there was a man...". I do not want just to pass over anything

without its force striking you. That John put in that word 'now' is tremendously significant. For some time I puzzled over the place of Nicodemus in the gospel by John. John in his summary said he had written his gospel with the one object of showing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31), and I could not see how Nicodemus fitted into that; but that little word 'now' linking with what had just been said and what follows, is a key. "*Now* there was a man...". And then as we go on we find that this word is used of the other, Christ, "the Son of Man". That title, as you may know, occurs some eighty-eight times in the New Testament, and eighty-four of the eighty-eight are in the gospels, and eleven times in this gospel by John. Forgive this detail, but it is important. What I said just now about why John wrote this, this title Son of man when it is used of Christ always has the definite article - "*the* Son of Man". It is a title used of others in the Bible, but whenever it is used of anyone else, it is always without the article - 'son of man'. But when it is Christ, it is always "*the* Son of Man".

The Earthly Man, Represented by Nicodemus

You have, then, two men, two people called 'man', and they are facing one another. On this side is the earthly man. Jesus does not commit Himself unto him. He knew all men in that category. He knew what was in that man, what he was made of, how he was constituted, what he was capable of. He knew all the constituents of that category, all men: man. And it is to that earthly man that these other words relate - "There was a man...", and John is really in the back of his mind saying and meaning, 'Now there was an earthly man named Nicodemus.' "That which is born of the flesh is flesh", that is the earthly man. Verse 13 again, "No one hath ascended into heaven" - that is the earthly man. Perhaps you say, "Well now, that is doubtful; Elijah did and Enoch did!" But if you knew the exactness of the Greek here, you would know that the Greek says, "No man of himself hath ascended into heaven." Elijah did not of himself, nor did Enoch of himself; but this One, this heavenly Man, ascended Himself. But this earthly man - "no man of himself". Verse 19 - "This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness." Verse 27 - "A man can receive nothing, except it hath been given him from heaven." This is the earthly man, what he is made of, how he is not going to be trusted by heaven, what his limitations are, what he cannot do of himself, and what he cannot receive of himself. "There was an earthly man".

The Lord Jesus, the Heavenly Man

On the other side, there is the heavenly Man. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "Born from above". Verse 12 - "If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" And, "no one hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended out of heaven, even the Son of Man, who is in heaven." Here is the heavenly Man. Verse 16 - "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (the heavenly Man from heaven, given from heaven). "God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world"; God sent His Son. Verse 31 - "He that cometh from above is above all." Then, of course, you want to read all those other passages later on. Take chapter 6 as a whole, or almost as a whole, "I am come down from heaven" (verse 38); "I... came down out of heaven" (verse 51); "I am the bread which came down out of heaven" (verse 41). You know how much there is of it there, and especially verse 62 of chapter 6 - "What then if ye should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?"

The Earthly Man at His Best

An earthly man and the heavenly Man standing face to face. Now, these two are representative men. Look at Nicodemus. There is a touch of genius about this thing in John's putting Nicodemus in here,

let us say there is the genius of the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus, a representative earthly man. As to his nation, he belongs to the chosen nation; out of all the nations, chosen of God, to whom belong the oracles (Rom. 3:2) and the covenant, a nation peculiarly and particularly related to God. Nicodemus belongs to that nation. As to his sect, he is a Pharisee, a man of the Pharisees. Pharisee is a Hebrew word which means separated by specific beliefs and practices. Within the chosen and particular nation, a particularly religious people or sect, you may say the very core of an elect nation; very strict in their tithing, eating and drinking, washings and rites; and they held very strictly to the belief in the natural immortality of the soul.

Jesus said to this representative Pharisee - "Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." As to his position: a member of the Sanhedrin, a ruler of the Jews, that is, a member of the National Council. As to his character, he is no man to be despised. Let us get rid of anything like that in our mentality about Nicodemus. He is a man to be honoured. He is mentioned three times by John. He is a perfectly honest man. The second mention is when he raises the question in the Council - "Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?" (John 7:51). The third time is when beloved friends were bringing their spices to the tomb and it says: "And there came also Nicodemus, he who at the first came to Him by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds" (John 19:39). He is out in the open now. He is an honest man. As to his spiritual condition he is blind, ignorant, helpless, "Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? ...We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" Blind, ignorant, helpless - that is the representative man, the earthly man at his best in every way.

Features of the Heavenly Man

The heavenly Man's nationality is from heaven. "He that is from above is above all", above all sects, above all laws and regulations; that is what John is bearing out throughout the whole gospel; above all ritual. His position is that of Divine authority: "the Father hath given all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). "As the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom He will" (John 5:21). His character is Divine. His spiritual condition is over against that of Nicodemus; there is one word that sums it up - "knowing". In his present condition, Nicodemus was blind, ignorant, helpless. Here is the Lord Jesus; just the opposite. Knowing, and, because knowing, never being at a loss, never being in a quandary, never knowing an impasse. He *knew* all men; He Himself knew what was in man. "We speak that which we know". "If I tell you heavenly things...", meaning that "I could, I know them... We speak that which we know." He is knowing.

The Heavenly Knowledge of the Son of Man

Now the point. Go back to chapter 1:48-49. "Nathaniel saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? ...Thou art the Son of God." This attribute of knowing man in the Bible is locked up to God alone. It is only attributed to Jehovah, the Lord. You remember the words of Jeremiah - "I, the Lord (Jehovah), search the mind, I try the heart" (Jer. 17:10). "I, the Lord, know". It is an attribute of God alone to know man in this way. "Whence knowest Thou me? Thou art the Son of God".

Now you see what I meant when I said John is putting two things together. Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus is the Son of man. The Son of man is the Son of God. Because He has Divine attributes, He knew all men. You notice that this knowledge is both universal and individual. He knew all men, and knows what is in man. All men universal, and man individual. And this characteristic of Deity was the thing which was constantly coming out, for in this gospel by John this word 'knew' in this sense

occurs fifty-six times. It is constantly coming out - His, what men would call, *uncanny* knowledge, His supernatural insight, that He was never at a loss for want of knowing what to do. He tested His disciples, "This said He to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do" (John 6:6). He was always precipitating impossible situations, and pushing them on to His disciples, and saying in effect, what are you going to do about that? "We cannot do anything! Two hundred pennyworth of bread will not go very far in a crowd like this!" - always helplessness because they did not know. And then He did a miracle, He knew. The heavenly Man over against the earthly.

Now, how are we going to bring this together for a present application? We are brought face to face with these two persons, one representative of the earthly at its best, the other representative of God's only acceptable Man, the only One who stands with God, the only One. He is alone with God, and all other men stand apart. Therefore you must be born from above. Except you be born from above, you cannot see the kingdom of God, or enter the kingdom.

There is a great divide between these two men, it cannot be bridged by argument, by discussion, by any kind of explanations sought by Nicodemus. You cannot get Christians from the one to the other. It is a great divide of irreconcilable differences, hosts of differences every day. There is the 'cannot' man. That word 'cannot' is final. "He *cannot* see". The 'cannot' man is the earthly man. Here is the Man who *can*, the heavenly Man. John is showing this all the way through this gospel: when no one else can, the Lord Jesus can.

The Earthly and the Heavenly Man in the Individual Christian

Now our point is not just the fact of the difference, nor the fact that we must be born from above, but it is the nature of the difference. Everything for the Christian begins here. We have stated it, we always declare it. There is nothing at all until you have been born from above. But I doubt whether any of us have got very far yet in the recognition and understanding of the difference between these two men, and until we do understand that, and mark the difference or the differences, we are going to get nowhere in the Christian life. You and I are still far more earthly as Christians than we ought to be; far less heavenly than we ought to be. The great divide between us in our natural life and our spiritual life is not so clearly marked as it ought to be, and that just opens the place for the understanding of God's strange ways with us.

When we get into the realm of the Holy Spirit's activities we get into the realm of the greatest, terrible reality. You cannot play with flesh, you cannot tolerate nature, or the natural life if you have come into the realm of the Spirit's activity, the reality is terrible reality. If we admit carelessly, knowingly, persistently, habitually, any of the earthly, we meet no other than very God Himself. That is the reality of this difference. You at once begin to discover that you cannot get on. There is a wall, a barrier, you are brought to a standstill when you admit any of the earthly into what is essentially the heavenly. These two are so utterly apart with God that this natural cannot work with God; there is no playing with it. The very first thing is the barrier of the impossibility of the natural being brought into the spiritual, the earthly into the heavenly. That will explain all the confoundings. Nicodemus is confounded when he comes face to face with the heavenly Man, and if we are on natural, earthly ground in any respect, we are going to be confounded by reason of our relationship with the Lord Jesus.

God's Ways to Bring About the End of the Earthly Man

(a) On the negative side

And then, what do the strange dealings of God with us mean? Sometimes we would like to run away

from the reality, it is so real. God is so real, things are so real. They are working out according to theory. Then what is God doing if He has us in hand through His strange, mysterious ways, His deep dealings with us? He is just winding up the earthly, bringing it to an end, in order to make us those who are heavenly, "Born from above", not only as a beginning, but in fulness of growth and manhood, conformed to the image of His Son. And the course of God's dealings with us is, on the one hand, to confound us in our natural earthly life, and write over it 'Impossible!' that in spirit, in soul, in body, we have no power, no attributes, no qualifications for knowing or doing heavenly things. At our best, we are helpless, blind and in the dark. But that is the negative side.

(b) On the positive side

On the other side, the positive, God is working mysteriously and strangely to bring us into heavenly things in knowledge and understanding. It is true that we as children of God do know things that no one else knows, that the earthly do not know. We do know, maybe a little, but we do know in that degree what the natural man does not know, and our knowledge of things spiritual and heavenly is growing, slightly perhaps, but it is growing. By deep, dark, mysterious, painful ways, we are moving through into a realm where we are coming to see that which we could never see and what no one could ever see but by a passage through death to being born from above. Oh, we cannot explain all God's methods, we cannot give an answer to all the why's of God's ways, but what we do know is that we are passing through into a realm that is altogether new in the matter of knowledge that is different, that is other. All the values of God are of this kind.

You cannot bring your natural mind to the things of God and begin to play upon them and give them interpretation with any spiritual value. However much you study the Bible, the Bible is closed for real spiritual value to everyone who has not gone through death to a heavenly new birth. That has to follow, but understand that this great divide, these two men, they are two men totally different, and there is no companionship, there is no shaking of hands between Nicodemus and Jesus. There is no fellowship, there is no understanding, they belong to two worlds, they cannot speak one another's language. Even when One from heaven gives heavenly meanings into earthly things, the earthly man cannot see the heavenly meanings, even in earthly things; so utter is the difference.

The Progressive Disappearance of the Earthly Man Dating from Heavenly Birth

The Lord is going to get rid of the differences where we are concerned. "Ye must be born from above", and then the differences begin to go. The things which lock us up and limit us will go; things which are impossible are now becoming the very things of our normal life. We are learning, but oh, it is a deep way because this earthly man is so deeply rooted, he is always cropping up in some way or other.

Understand what God is doing with you. God is working with us so that, as we move on this earth and through this life and leave this world, the one remaining impression will be: a heavenly man, a heavenly woman, has been on this earth! Not how much we have done or said, all our activities, but just the impression we have left behind: that a heavenly man, a heavenly woman, has passed through this world, has been recognised here; that is all. That is the explanation of God's dealings with us. If you forget all the other that I have said, do not forget that.

The one consequence that God is after is to leave this impression by our having been on this earth: something has come from heaven and registered its heavenliness here in this world. Oh, it may have been rejected, the reactions to it may have been violent. The more heavenly it is, perhaps the more violent the reactions to it will be. That is what John says about the Lord Jesus, but that does not alter the fact that Jesus passed through this world and left the impression of a heavenly Man. And that is

the whole argument of the New Testament in every part, that believers are to be here, not for this or that or some other incidental thing, but to leave the impression of heaven here, that God should have a witness here, that heavenly things, things of eternity, things of the Spirit, are the things which matter. Do not think that it is a matter of how much preaching or teaching or Christian work you do. Those things may be accompaniments, but if there is not the presence of Christ, the heavenly Man, in those concerned and in what they do and in what they say, and if the one remaining thing when they have passed on is not - "We recognised the Lord in that man, that woman" - then we have missed the meaning of Christianity. Christianity is that. Therefore you must be born from above, because that brings in what is of heaven.

Chapter 2 - The Earthly and the Heavenly Man Meeting in the Cross

Reading: John 3:14-21.

In our previous meditation, we were occupied with the earlier part of this chapter in which we saw two men looking at one another across a great divide between two irreconcilable worlds - the earthly man at his best, represented by Nicodemus; the heavenly Man in all His complete difference and "otherness" - Jesus. As this chapter proceeds, we are brought to that great divide, that great difference and 'otherness', and made to see that it meets in the Cross.

The two men meet in the Cross, and one disappears, so far as God is concerned, and the Other goes on. One, with all that he is as before God of impossibility, and the other as He is before God with all His possibilities, they meet here in the Cross. Into this section, these few verses from 14-21 and the whole of the letter to the Romans is crowded, and we have to read that letter to see what it means, in the first instance, in the fundamental instance, to be born from above.

No Righteousness Found in Earthly Man at His Best

The letter to the Romans is a very comprehensive and thorough setting forth of what it means basically to be born from above, and therefore we shall have that letter in mind before us with this part of the gospel by John.

Nicodemus is representative of all that man would call good, splendid, presentable, and acceptable with God, all that man would consider as not being reprobate or depraved. This man Nicodemus is led back in his own nation's history to a point well-known by him, in a wilderness where serpents are rife, loose everywhere, venomous, deadly, spreading death through the multitude and through the nation. Then at the command of the Lord, a likeness of a serpent is made of brass and fastened upon a pole and lifted up, and the people are preached to by a priest who tells them of their way of deliverance, by a look of faith towards that serpent. And it is this splendid representative of that nation who is called upon now to look at that, and then, with a swift movement, is asked to pass from Numbers 21 onto another scene shortly to be enacted outside Jerusalem, where this One who stands facing Nicodemus will be lifted up as that serpent was lifted up, that this splendid Jew, this magnificent specimen of the nation, this ruler, this teacher in Israel might find his salvation, his life, only in the same way - by a look of faith at the Son of Man lifted up. And he is left to make his own deductions from the implication.

The letter to the Romans gives us those deductions. The implications are in John. The deductions and consequences are in Romans. This man is regarded as the very embodiment of righteousness according to Jewish standards. He would not be in his position as a ruler and a teacher, a Pharisee, were it not that he was a man who passed all the tests of righteousness according to Jewish standards. The letter to the Romans brings us immediately face to face with this question of righteousness and we find that in those early chapters, a sweeping quest is made throughout the whole creation for this thing called righteousness. God is looking into the whole creation, sending out His messengers to find righteousness, and to round up all in whom righteousness is not found.

In Romans we find part after part, section after section of man, mankind, is searched in order to find

this righteousness. The net is spread worldwide, universally, to gather in all in whom righteousness is not found, and the net is seen to be closing in, narrowing down, from all men to some men, and then to these of the Jewish nation. The net is closing in, and there are none outside of it. It is bringing everyone, no one is escaping; they are all coming in this great net of condemnation, and in the end not a single man remains outside, "not one is righteous, no, not one, all have sinned", and therefore judgment, through condemnation is universal. And Nicodemus is in the net, and badly in the net.

Earthly Man at His Best Identified with the Serpent

Look at the serpent. What does the serpent signify? That old serpent, the devil (Rev. 20:2), the deceiver, the poisoner, the source and instigator of all iniquity, and of total and utter depravity. Nicodemus, that is you! A terrible thing for Nicodemus to swallow! It was a terrible thing for Israel to swallow! They would not swallow it. That is why they were so bitter with a bitterness of devilish hatred against the Son of Man. Total depravity. You will agree that that is so, with the serpent lifted up, will you not? You were not prepared at the outset to agree that that is true about Nicodemus, or yourself, or many men known to you, but the Lord Jesus is not sparing anyone. He uses this 'whosoever'.

The world - not the Jewish world, not the Latin world, not the Greek world - they are all in Romans. This letter to the Romans touches all those three great world representations. You will find them all in the letter - Latins, Greeks, Hebrews. It is a comprehensive letter. The whole world - "whosoever" - the world. Nicodemus is in the net, all are in the net. Sin - "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23). Judgment is passed upon all men, for all have sinned. Death - "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). That is John 3:14-21 and the letter to the Romans at its outset.

The Death of the Earthly Man in the Cross and the Emergence of the Heavenly Man

But then the Lord has so ordered that Nicodemus is brought right up to that Cross, and shown that although that is his nature in the sight of God, that is his state, that is his doom, it need not be literally and actually. It can be his representatively and substitutionarily, the Son of Man lifted up. Now Nicodemus will truly be there, but in a different way from judgment. So we find that this letter to the Romans leads this whole world full of judged, condemned and doomed mankind, to the Cross (chapter 6) of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of Man lifted up, found now still as the heavenly Man, but having voluntarily taken the very place of this earthly man in his position and in his condition. "Him who knew no sin He made sin on our behalf" (2 Cor. 5:21). He was made a curse for us. And there in the Son of Man lifted up is an end of that earthly man in his position and in his condition, the end of all that we said about that earthly man in our previous meditation, and the beginning of the heavenly Man. "If we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him...". Raised together in the likeness of His resurrection: the new man, the heavenly man, introduced. The great 'cannot' over that earthly man, the great 'cannot', forever established and ratified in the Cross. Remember that.

Oh no, there is no serpent wriggling out of that Cross, somehow getting round that Cross and escaping onto the other side and reappearing. That serpent is finished with before God. And all that that means is everything which has his venom in it, his nature in it, is in God's mind finished, ratified; the 'cannot' man nailed, the great 'cannot' established.

We must lay hold of the fact that whatever we may find in ourselves as believers, even after faith's acceptance of this identification with Christ in death, it belongs to the earthly man and is not

accepted by God. The Cross of Jesus Christ says, No! - forever, fully, and finally. No excusing, no condoning. It is terribly harsh judgment, and "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1 Cor. 11:31 A.V.). We have to be ruthless with ourselves on that side, because God has been ruthless with Satan.

The serpent lifted up and the Son of Man lifted up, but they are identical in the sight of God. They are not two things, but one thing, so utterly has Christ entered into the work of Satan to destroy it. If He had not utterly entered into it, He could not have utterly destroyed it. And we are there as the earthly man whose place has been taken by the Lord Jesus in that utter way.

See God's attitude and the total judgment upon total depravity, repudiating and denying it, forsaking and abandoning it. God is not going to be with us when we begin to condone and excuse and say, "This is just the old man, old Adam; we all have some imperfection!" No, that is not God's attitude.

We saw in our last word in the previous chapter that God has only one Man in view and that is the heavenly Man. God does not commit Himself to the earthly man. "Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man." And this was what He knew was in man the serpent. He is not committing Himself to the serpent.

This is the meaning of holiness, the basis of holiness. We have been too easy with ourselves. The 'cannot man' is abandoned and the 'cannot' is established forever, but the 'can' Man is introduced, and He also is established in the resurrection.

The Work of the Cross Entered into by Living Faith

The Roman letter, then, is condemnation without any escape. Then, through faith and justification, putting faith in that One lifted up; it is the object which gives the value to faith. It is not some abstract thing called faith. No, it is the pinning of our entire destiny to Christ crucified and raised. No hope whatever otherwise, but all our hope in Him lifted up. The dark side and the light side: "Whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life"; this is justification.

The Working out of the Cross by the Spirit

That is the picture here, that is the setting. It only remains for us to make the application, to get into this, because this has not really been entered into. I am not saying this has not been seen as a truth, accepted as a truth, believed as a truth, preached as a truth, professed as a truth, and declared as a position. No, all that may be, but because this has not really been entered into, we have so much confusion, mixture, contradiction, and inconsistency. Two things have got mixed up and there is no clear emergence of a heavenly Man; it is a mixed up man.

I am not talking about sinlessness, I am talking about the introducing, presenting, and progressive growth of a heavenly Man, seen firstly in a clearly defined cut that something radical has happened and there is a basic difference. That person is not the same person that he was. If you right at the beginning met them, you are meeting something heavenly now, you are not meeting what you met before; there is a radical difference. And it does not stay there. That difference is going on, and you are meeting less and less of what you met before, and you are meeting more and more of what was never there before. The earthly is going where God put it, the earthly is being repudiated by a conscious teaching and direction of the indwelling Spirit of Life, indicating what is belonging to that old life has to be repudiated, pointing out what must go.

There is something basically and fundamentally wrong when a Christian, after so long, is still guilty of the same natural, earthly things persistently, that were there before. I am not only talking about gross sins, I am talking about the earthly man. He may be a Nicodemus; even Nicodemus is going to come to see that all is not well.

You have only got to call him [the earthly man] by another name: Saul of Tarsus, of the strictest sect of the Pharisees. And that man, who would pass every test according to Jewish standards of righteousness, would come in to say, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). The Holy Spirit can do marvellous things in making us aware of what we are entirely blind to. I do not understand the persistence of blind spots in a Christian indefinitely, something persisting all the time that is obviously doubtful, questionable, wrong, harmful, unwise or indiscreet. Let us be careful. Do not think about anyone else, think about yourself. There are many things about us which would not be called gross iniquities, that are still very harmful and un-Christ like, and certainly not the heavenly Man.

What I am saying is this: in the heavenly Man there is a progressive check-up, and you cannot, if you are going on the heavenly way, indefinitely repeat those things which are not heavenly without knowing it. Oh no, you will know. It is as well we do. It may give us a bad time, but we would not have it otherwise. We would surely say, "Lord, do not let me go on in an earthly way, contradicting the heavenly without knowing it". The more heavenly we become, the more acute will be those lessons, and the worse will be our bad times under the Holy Spirit's hand, for the Holy Spirit is working, not to our estimate of the Cross, but to God's. But God's estimate of the Cross is that we by nature are utterly defiled and Christ is utterly perfect. He is working towards that conformity to the image of His Son which Romans tells us about.

Now then, one or two other applications. That is the application of the Cross to the whole of the earthly man, and the relationship of the Cross to the whole of the heavenly Man. Basically, it is a crisis, a divide, a mighty difference; being progressively transformed, changed. We are not just changed mechanically; God is so practical, the Cross is so practical. We are only changed by the working of death in us to give more room for Life, for Christ. The ways of God come in here again.

The crucifying ways to our flesh, the terrible ways to our natures, all that against which we naturally revolt, under which the earthly part of us writhes, all that is God's way of bringing the principle of the Cross home, to make things more than theoretical, to make things practical. At any rate, it works that way. That is what happens, and the points at which that Cross is applied are countless. I could never tabulate them if I tried. All of us differ so much; the change takes place on all manner of things. If I were to stop to illustrate, I would only spoil the picture, perhaps because I should miss so much. But you have to say about people who are now living on the resurrection side - "They are becoming so different, they used to be this, they used to be that, this used to be the thing about them, it was so difficult and trying, but they are becoming different..." that is all that you have to say about it, but that is it.

The Utterness of God's Dealing with the Earthly Man and the Need of Faith's Appropriation

Having said that, let me focus upon the utterness of this thing. Remember that God's tense about this is the past tense. The past tenses of John 3:14 and onward are rather impressive, and the past tenses of Romans, especially chapter 6, are indeed inescapable. "Our old man *was* crucified with Him". Is it not true that the trouble with us is that we are so terribly occupied and obsessed with that old man which was crucified, who, in God's thought and mind is dead and buried? And we are digging him up all the time and having a look at him, and trying to paint him up and make him look a bit better, and

this is proved by our prayers. Listen to how people pray, and you will see how far they have got into Romans 6, "Oh, what a miserable creature I am! Lord, you know all this about me, what a poor specimen I am..." telling the Lord all about this corpse, and that kind of prayer gets nowhere. It brings death, darkness and misery in; it effects nothing. You know nothing about Romans 6, however much you could quote word for word all the written doctrine, however much you have preached about it or talked about it, if you are constantly going to bring up that wretched self-life before the Lord in public or private prayer.

What is the alternative? The people who know anything about Romans 6 are the people who are in prayer glorying in Christ Jesus. "Oh, thank you, Lord, for Christ, for all that He means!" They are rejoicing in Jesus Christ in prayer. It is a radical test. You start off praying, before you have got very far, even starting with this, somehow or other you cannot get many sentences out before you drop down to that wretched level, and you have denied your Christ, you have set apart the heavenly Man, you have gone back to the other side of the Cross and nullified the Son of man. You have opened the door for death again, and Satan is going to encamp upon that ground and bring in his work which the Son of man was manifested to destroy. A true apprehension of Romans 6 means that our eyes, our faith and our hearts are pinned upon the risen Son of God, risen for our justification.

Three Questions as a Test of our Position

Oh, I call upon you to call to mind the three great interrogatives of Romans 8:31. The first interrogative - "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Look at the context of that. "What then shall we say to these things?" What things? "Whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; and whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (v. 29,30). "What are you going to say to that?" says Paul. How is God for us? Whom He foreordained, whom He called, whom He justified, whom He glorified. God is for you in Christ. He gave His Son to establish that, to ratify that. What are you going to say about it? "Oh... what a wretched thing I am! What a miserable, deplorable creature..." is that what you are going to say about it? "What then shall we say to these things?"

The second great interrogation, verse 33: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, Who is at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us." Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? What is your answer to that? "Oh, everything that you can think of can be laid at my door, every charge is true of me..." as one of God's elect? You have got to give a better answer to the question than that.

The third interrogation, verse 35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Is the love of Christ to you stronger than sin, than Satan, than all the work of Satan? Tribulation, anguish, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword - is the love of Christ stronger than all that to you? You have not apprehended Romans 6 if it is not. If you have apprehended the meaning of the Cross, you say, "I am persuaded that none of these things shall separate me from His love. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Just the contemplation of those three great interrogations is enough surely to show us whether we really have entered into Romans 6, the chapter we know so much about. Then, be gone despair, be

gone misery, be gone all that would say to this world that we are lost, hopeless, and undone. Oh, be gone self-pity, be gone the love of having a problem, be gone all this speaking about ourselves and thinking about ourselves which only works out to draw attention to ourselves and make people sorry for us! God save us by His Cross from it all!

Yes, tribulation and anguish and peril and nakedness and sword, they are all real, they are all there, but with all our sufferings and tribulations, the question of our position with the Lord is not to be touched. We may be in heaviness through manifold trials; the apostle was there. We may have times of suffering when our spirits are cast down, but not because we have a question about our position with the Lord and the Lord's love for us. Oh no, Romans 6 is deliverance from this earthly man in all these ways. It is so comprehensive, it is so thorough.

But what is the issue? Well, it is, as we said earlier, what are people meeting when they meet us? That is the test of where Romans 6 is with us: what people meet, whether they meet the other side of the Cross, or this side of the Cross; whether they meet the earthly man, or the heavenly Man. We are not perfect as to the heavenly Man all at once, but there should be a knowing of progress in this, that the heavenly Man is growing, Christ is being fully formed in us, the situation is changing, we are not met at the point where we were met so long ago. It must be. This is what Romans says as to the meaning of being born from above.

Romans says that John 3:3 means this fundamentally, basically: the great change has taken place, and that change is being seen in development, if not by us as the subjects of it, by others as the observers. A change is taking place. From misery we are rising to triumph, from despair to hope and assurance, from darkness to light.

Chapter 3 - The Food of the Earthly Man and the Heavenly Man

Reading: Joshua 5:10-12; John 6:4,48-50; 14:1-4.

Continuing along the line of our earlier occupation, the subject in the gospel by John is the displacing of the earthly man in favour of the heavenly Man. In chapter two we saw these two men facing each other, Nicodemus and Jesus. And I think we saw enough to make it quite clear that Nicodemus was representative of the earthly man at his best, and how that man is at an impasse, utterly incapable of moving in the heavenly realm. On the other hand, there is Jesus, the heavenly Man speaking heavenly things, doing everything out from heaven. Then we saw these two meeting in the Cross, the earthly man passing out, the heavenly Man going on. So not only the gospel by John, but all the New Testament has to do with this displacing of the earthly man in favour of the heavenly Man; the supplanting of the earthly man by the heavenly.

Life by Feeding

Now our particular occupation will be with formation after Christ, the heavenly Man, by feeding upon Christ.

In that passage in the book of Joshua, we saw three feedings: the Passover, the manna, and the old corn of the land. The basic factor in feeding, whether it be temporal or spiritual, is life, and life in order to be able to go on. The Passover feeding was the principle of life in order to go out from Egypt; the manna feeding was the principle of life to go through the wilderness; the old corn of the land was to maintain position in the land by life. Feeding, therefore, on this principle of life, is governed by progress towards God's end, which end is Christ, and the progress is conformity to Christ. You need not be told that here in this gospel by John, the great principle in view is Life, and here we have three feedings corresponding to those mentioned in Joshua.

The Passover of the Jews is mentioned quite a number of times in John's gospel at least. There were three Passovers actually, with which Jesus was connected in this gospel. Chapter 6, the manna; and although feeding is not mentioned in chapter 14, we have what corresponds to the old corn of the land, as we shall see. Then let us get clearly in view that the basic factor is heavenly Life in relation to reaching God's end - Christ in fulness, conformity to Christ.

It is perfectly clear that Nicodemus cannot go on to God's end until he receives, through faith in Jesus Christ, the Life by which he will be brought to God's end, which is Christ in fulness.

We must come to these three feedings.

(a) The Passover - Fundamental and Continuous

You know the story of the Passover as recorded in Exodus 12 - the eating of the flesh, the first Passover. The thing I want to point out about the Passover is that it is fundamental and continuous. With the Passover you have something that goes on.

It was in Egypt, it was in the wilderness, and it continued in the land. It went right on through every

regime of the history of Israel, excepting the exile. It was the great rallying point of the days of the division of the kingdom in the time of Hezekiah or Josiah. It is something that is continuous, that is found wherever the Lord's people are. It is basic to their very life at all times, and that is because of its supreme significance. The Passover sets forth the judgment of God against sin and the destruction of death, and that is something that holds good, and that is a testimony which has got to be kept constantly in the heart of the people. It is something which is basic to progress towards God's end. That is the point.

There is a link, of course, between the Passover and the Lord's table. It was in the night of the Passover that the Lord's table was instituted, and it carried over the basic principles of the Passover. And that is why the Lord has desired and shown that this is something to be kept in perpetual remembrance, it is something to be observed until He comes. It is something that has to be there as a testimony in the heart of His people right on through all time and in all conditions, wherever the Lord's people are. And it simply amounts to this, that you and I will make no progress at all in conformity to Christ unless the testimony is maintained continuously in our hearts that sin has been fully and utterly judged in the Person of Jesus Christ, and that death has been swallowed up in victory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus. That is elementary, but it is not so elementary as to be dismissed. The Lord says, "You must not dismiss that; this goes on from first to last, from beginning to end".

There are no doubt many young Christians here today who would smile if I suggested that the time might come when they would be tempted to question their very salvation, their very acceptance with God, or doubt the very foundation of their Christian life and come into clouds of darkness about the very love of God for their souls. You are today so joyful in your salvation, in your Christianity, that you smile if anybody says anything like that. You would retort at once, like Peter, "Though all men forsake Thee, yet will I not forsake Thee." You do not know your heart, and you do not know the devil. Our hearts, right on to the end, no matter how long we have walked with God, no matter how deeply we have come to know the Lord, our own hearts - that which is still of the earthly man - are still capable of questioning the fundamental love of God for our souls. Under the devil's intense pressure, under the trials to which we may be subjected, in the situations which the Lord may allow to arise for our testing and the perfecting of our faith, it becomes almost easy to raise fundamental questions about our salvation. And the most saintly servants of God, who have walked with God through long years of a long life, who have suffered and served and been greatly used, have on their beds at the end found themselves encompassed by dark clouds of question as to whether they were saved after all. That is not an exaggeration. You have only to read the life of A. B. Simpson - and who will question that he was a saintly man of God, greatly used, a channel of immense blessing to the ends of the earth? He in his last hours was encompassed by darkness, so that a brother had to kneel at his bedside day and night to fight the dark clouds of doubt about that man's very salvation. The enemy never gives up trying to undercut this fact, that sin has been fully and finally judged in the Person of Christ. The Father vented unmitigated judgment upon His Son for us, and death was conquered and destroyed. So the Lord says, "You will never go on, you will never arrive, you will never make any progress towards the full end of Christ unless this is maintained as a testimony in vour heart".

We do not gather around the Lord's table just as a matter of form, just to keep up something; neither because the Lord said that He would that we should do it until He comes. Why do we do it if it is not this? There is only a short span of a week between today and on Sundays. I hold in my heart strongly to this testimony, that Jesus has met the whole sin question, and the whole death question as the consequence of sin, on my behalf; I stand continually on that ground! To come to the Lord's table and to have questions about that sin question and about the consequence question (death) is to deny

the Lord's table. We need it for deliverance from Egypt, we need it for triumph in the wilderness, we need it for maintaining our place in the heavenlies. It is fundamental. We shall only make progress as we maintain this testimony, not as an ordinance, but as the basis of everything in our hearts. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

You notice with Israel, even when they were in the wilderness, out of Egypt, that Egypt was still reaching out its octopus tentacles to bring them back. Yes, Egypt pursued them not only outwardly to the Red Sea, but inwardly in their hearts. There was always this something seeking to bring them back, and the maintenance of the Passover continually testified that Egypt was cut off, judgment had been vented, and death destroyed. They were separated from all that by the Passover. And it is like that, this reaching out to lay hold of us, under pressure, trial, or adversity to nullify the great work of the Cross in our hearts. It is a spectre that follows us all the time, and the Passover is a testimony against its right to have any power over us at all.

(b) The Manna - Life Sustained in the Wilderness

As to the manna, the second feeding, which belonged to the wilderness, it was the testimony to the sustaining of life for progress in the wilderness. If they had not had food from heaven, they would neither have lived nor made progress. That, of course, is obvious. Here in John you have a multitude in a wilderness in that position, typically. They will perish, they will not come to that for which Christ has come, unless something happens. He takes up this matter of Moses and the manna. He says the type failed: "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died" (John 6:49). The type failed, but here is the true Manna from heaven, "that a man may eat thereof, and not die" (verse 50). This is Christ, the mystery, for the manna was a mystery. They said, "What is it?" (Ex. 16:15). It was something unknown, something for which there was no formula; the mystery of Christ as our supply from heaven in the daily walk where nothing whatever is offered for our succour and sustenance here, but wilderness conditions.

And this is something offered to faith. The Lord kept the manna on a faith basis very strictly. He never allowed it to go from one day to the other. He said, "This is something that you will have to anticipate by faith anew, afresh, all over again, every day. You are going to have nothing that you can count upon, nothing that you can put by and say, 'Well, at any rate, we have so much; we need not worry about tomorrow'." No, He kept them strictly on a day by day anticipation of faith. If they worried overnight, that was their fault. What happened in the morning was this - when they woke up, their attitude was either, "I wonder whether there is anything for us to eat today", or, "God is faithful, we will go out and find His provision there for us" - simple, but very definite faith every day.

This is the mystery of daily sustenance when there is nothing whatever upon which to rely here; it is Christ sustaining in wilderness conditions. You must read into that phrase - 'wilderness conditions' all that you know of heavenly life here, which has nothing in this world to maintain it, but everything against it - your conditions, your circumstances, your position, and nothing to help, and yet the mystery! I feel we are very slow to learn this lesson. We again and again come up against situations and circumstances where once more there is nothing to go on. It may be in ministry - nothing to go on. The Lord has not stored you up with messages and material a long way ahead. It may be in life today, or the immediate future offers nothing, and the need is so great. How are we going to face it and get through? It is like that in many ways. Just how are you going to get through?

We can see nothing, and we are so slow to learn this lesson. Do we not have enough history behind us to say that the Lord did not fail? Every time He met the need, strangely, mysteriously, we hardly know how He did it, but He did it. I am talking about the spiritual life being maintained from heaven

in a world where there is nothing but what is contrary to that heavenly life. How shall we go on towards God's end? Oh, just in this way, the way of the manna: "Well, here is a new situation; we have nothing whatever in ourselves with which to meet it, there is nothing around us at all that can stand up to this situation, but the Lord who has in the past, will on this occasion also, see us through". Although that sounds so simple, it is not so simple, because it seems that the trials, the situations, become more and more exacting as we go on; more difficult, more impossible. Faith is being more sorely tested; but we may feed on Christ, the heavenly Manna, by faith. What do we mean by faith? Why, "Here is another day to be met, and there is nothing with which to meet it, but Lord, I take You for this situation, for this need. Faith lays hold of You to see me through, that I go on and do not come to a standstill by these conditions". That is feeding on Christ by faith.

(c) The Old Corn of the Land - the Lord Jesus, the Firstfruits

In spiritual experience of course, there is not such a precise break between the wilderness and the land as there seems to be in Joshua, and that is quite in keeping with the New Testament. You know Peter's writings were for pilgrims and strangers; Paul's were for citizens of a heavenly country. We have an earthly side of testing and trial, of the perfecting of faith. But then there is that which corresponds to the heavenlies in Christ. John 14 brings this in. The Lord is going and He is saying, "Let not your heart be troubled, but you are being called upon now to live on a much higher level of spiritual life in the heavenlies. You are going to meet forces of evil in high places", all that corresponds to the book of Joshua.

You are going to find that it is not only earthly trials and difficulties, but you are going to meet the forces of evil. These are two experiences common to Christians. There are the earthly trials, the wilderness experiences, things common to us down here, but there are other things as well. Some of us know those sheer forces of evil in the heavenlies, the extra realm of spiritual adversity, and we are going to be called upon to live in that realm, in the land, in the heavenlies. What food will get you through? What is the old corn of the land? I understand that it means that which is already there, waiting. It is last year's harvest, not something that has to be brought in. It is already waiting for you there, and, as I see it, it is this - the Lord Jesus is there already, He has gone on before, He is the firstfruits, He is already ahead of us in the heavenlies, He has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. We must feed on that, that Christ is enthroned above, that Christ is victor and has sat down, that principalities and powers and all these forces are already under His feet, subject to Him. That is something secured already in heaven by His having gone there. That is the old corn of the land, that is the food.

In this spiritual conflict, this spiritual warfare, in this situation so difficult to maintain a heavenly position, because of all that belongs there we need sustenance to go on. What is the sustenance, what is the food, what is the old corn of the land? It is Christ exalted, Christ enthroned, Christ already there. "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). 'I reign - ye shall reign.' Feed on it, believe it, take it by faith that you are not going to be brought to a standstill, it is not necessary for you to come to a halt. It is not necessary for you to die under the pressure of the enemy; Christ is there in the land, already in possession of the situation. Feed on that by faith, and you will go on in the realm which is the most difficult realm of all.

Temporal trials may be great, earthly situations may be difficult, but these intensely spiritual ones of the heavenlies are far greater. But God has provided for every situation in order to get us through to His end - full conformity to His Son. This is how the earthly man is supplanted and the heavenly Man takes his place. Conformity to Christ, formation after Christ by feeding upon Christ, Christ in this threefold meaning - the Passover, the manna and the old corn of the land.

Chapter 4 - The Earthly Man... in the Realm of Heavenly Things

Reading: John 3:3,6,8,10-13; 1 Cor. 2:7-16: 3:1-4.

When we were opening the matter which the Lord has laid on our hearts for this time, one of our remarks was that the whole of the New Testament is concerned with the superseding of the earthly man by the heavenly Man, and we have been proceeding to see something of how true that is. I could enlarge that and say that the same is true of the Old Testament, bringing the whole Bible into line with that - the superseding of the earthly man by the heavenly, the displacing of the one in the interests of the other.

We have also seen how the letter to the Romans fits right into the third chapter of John at the point marked by verses 14-21. We have seen how the two men, Nicodemus representative of the earthly man, and Jesus the Son of Man, facing each other, had nothing whatever in common, but were looking at each other across a great divide. And then how the Cross is introduced, and in the mystery of identification they both go down into death: the one earthly man is left forever behind in the grave so far as God's view is concerned; the other, the heavenly Man, is raised and goes on eternally. That is the letter to the Romans, the focal point of which is chapter 6.

The Earthly Man and the Spiritual Man Found in the Individual Christian

Now it is very easy for us to see from the passages which we have read from John 3 and 1 Corinthians how this first letter to the Corinthians fits right into that third chapter of John. The first statement, "Ye must be born from above", defined as being born of the Spirit, the nature of that is said to be spiritual - "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" - and the tremendous impossibilities connected with the earthly man are removed when we're born of the Spirit. Far reaches and ranges of Divine thought and intention are immediately opened up, and that is all marked so clearly for us here in this letter to the Corinthians. We are immediately in the presence of two men when we open this letter: the carnal or natural man, and the spiritual man. Now it is not two men outside of Christ, the two men occupy one body. It is Christians, but divided Christians. I am not speaking of Christians in the plural, but Christians individually. Divided Christians are creating a divided condition outside. The fact is that there is a schism here, a division in the Christian. The two are found in a place which is altogether contrary to God's intention; carnality on the one side, and spirituality on the other. The carnal man bringing arrest upon the spiritual man; the spiritual man finding himself unable to go on, under strict and severe limitations because of the carnal man alongside of him. This whole letter proceeds to show how these two are opposed to one another, and how impossible a situation it is for them to coexist.

The Earthly Man's Standard of Values

What the letter really amounts to is just this. It says, in effect, the born from above man must not follow the earthly man, must not try to go on hand in hand with the earthly man. The letter is almost entirely full of the earthliness of this carnal man, but over against him, shadowing him, is the spiritual man. We find earthliness here in Christians in three categories of earthly standards.

(a) In regard to wisdom

The question of *wisdom* is a perfectly and purely earthly standard with these Corinthians. They are regarding as the thing of importance, the supreme thing, the *wisdom* of this world. Their attitude is that if you are endowed with this world's wisdom in any extra sense and fulness, that constitutes you somebody of importance, it is that that makes you important.

And then there is another aspect of their earthly standards. They look at people and judge people entirely from the earthly standpoint. If you are somebody as a person on this earth to take account of in a natural way, even though you might be a very spiritual person, your spirituality gives you some influence and some standing, and therefore your spirituality is misunderstood and misinterpreted, and you are made something important naturally by your very spirituality; so subtle is this earthly man. That of course is borne out by the way they looked at the apostles. One said, "I am of Paul." Why did they say, "I am of Paul"? They judged him naturally. Paul had endowments, spiritual values, spiritual measure, spiritual influence. Paul was a spiritual factor, but they did not say, "It is the spirituality of Paul that makes Paul what he is", they said, "Paul himself is an important person, is someone to take account of". They missed the spiritual meaning and just made something of the man and did violence to that which made him the influence that he was.

Others said, "I am of Apollos". Apollos had certain qualifications and qualities of which we know. He was mighty in the Scriptures, he was an eloquent man (Acts 18:24-25). He could reason and argue and out-argue, and that appealed to the earthly side of these people, and they judged Apollos purely from the earthly standards. Others said, "I am of Peter"; the same standard of judgment: not their spirituality as accounting for what they were, but simply the fact that they were something, and that is the thing that matters, that you are something, not that you are spiritual. How carnal that is, how earthly that is. That is done a very great deal. People are looked at superficially concerning their standing, their influence, their value, and the person is made something of simply because of the position they hold, and not how they got there, what it cost, all the travail and anguish and crucifixion of self that gave them that position before God.

Of course, the only outcome of viewing things in that earthly way, from that standard of earthly values, was divisions. "Are ye not as men, earthly men when you say these things?" That is just men, not the heavenly Man, by any means, but the earthly man. I shall come back there again, perhaps, before we are finished.

(b) In regard to behaviour

The second category of earthly things here in this letter is that of earthly *behaviour*. Oh, the conduct, the behaviour, of these people as it is set forth in this letter, is terrible and shameful: disclosure, license, lawsuits, legality, the Lord's table. Earthly behaviour in all directions and connections - shameful behaviour - the earthly man in the church.

(c) In regard to 'spirituality'

Thirdly - I am going to use a phrase which will sound strange, certainly sound like a contradiction in terms - 'earthly spirituality', There is a lot of it about. That is, pulling heavenly things down on to earth. These people gloried in spiritual gifts. Paul says they were spiritual gifts. The Lord gave them from heaven, but these people, because of their earthly position, pulled them right down from their heavenly realm and made them earthly and gloried in them as things for bringing men into prominence and for bringing gratification to the natural life, the soul-life of man. It is nice to see these extraordinary things at work. Tongues is extraordinary, supernatural, out of the usual, but if it is made something in itself it will not be long before there is fanaticism. Fanaticism is not of heaven;

it is devilish and it destroys the church. Earthly 'spirituality'. I could dwell a long time upon that in its many and various forms. I am simply indicating that in this letter we have on the one hand the presentation of the earthly man as he comes into the realm of heavenly things and disturbs the balance, upsets everything, and creates a situation which is a violation of the very nature of things heavenly and a contradiction to that which is born of the Spirit.

The Oneness of the Heavenly Man

What the Holy Spirit is saying through the apostle in this letter is that a heavenly man will not do these things. None of these things will be characteristic of a heavenly man.

Take as an example this matter of divisions. Paul says here, or the Spirit through Paul says here, "This is carnal, this is natural, this is earthly". "As men". These divisions are the earthly man aspect of things. "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal... do ye not walk after the manner of men?" (1 Cor. 3:1-3). It is not forbidden that we should, in the perfectly human sense, be men. The Lord does not want us disembodied spirits. That is not what is here, but when he speaks about being as men, he means this earthly man, and you are forbidden to be that, and he says that divisions among the Lord's people are a disclosure of the fact of the earthliness of the Lord's people and he sets over against that the heavenly Man, and he gets to chapter 12 - one body, one Spirit, and the complete interrelatedness of all the members of the body. And here, in answer to these divisions, he asks, "Is Christ divided?" The heavenly Man is not divided, and the expression of the heavenly Man is the church as one body, and he comes back with that to the Lord's table. "The loaf which we break, is it not our *communion*, our participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). "One bread, one body". This is the heavenly Man, and there is no division in the heavenly Man, all divisions belong to earthliness, they are characteristic of earthliness, they are signs of earthliness.

There have been many things said and written about division and union, all with a view to try and bring about something more of Christian unity. Sometimes it is made a matter of essential doctrine, that we will cease to be divided by non-essentials, and we will take our common ground united upon doctrinal essentials. Sometimes it is the appeal to John 17, "That they may be one, even as we are one", the great prayer for oneness of the Lord. Sometimes that is made the ground of the appeal for oneness. There are other things that I could mention which have been set forth as the basis of Christian unity. Now, they may not be all wrong. Do not think I am taking a superior position and saying I have higher ground than that, but what I do come to here is this in the New Testament: the place at which divisions among Christians is most openly shown links those divisions entirely with the earthliness of Christians. And over against that, it shows quite clearly that in the heavenly Man those divisions do not exist and cannot exist. Therefore it is only as Christians take heavenly ground, the ground of the heavenly Man, and are conformed to the heavenly Man that such divisions will cease to affect them. That is what is here. It is a matter that we should take careful note of, this whole matter of divisions and schisms among Christians.

As we have said before, the object of John is to bring in the heavenly Man, and show how He supersedes and supplants the earthly man and, ignoring chapter divisions, see the gospel as one thing and move on to that point which is marked by chapter 17, "These things spake Jesus; and lifting up His eyes *to heaven*, He said, Father, the hour is come... glorify thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (v.1-5). The setting of that prayer is in eternity, outside of time. And then on through the prayer, how often "they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world", "I am not of the world", "the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world", "not of the world", "out of the world", "I am not of the world". The setting is outside of time, and outside of the world, and you have to see that unity, "that they may be one" requires that setting, and you will

never have it while men are earthly in their standards of judgment, in their conduct, in their 'spirituality'.

A vast amount of the Christianity today is earthly; it is according to the standards of men. The prayer of the Lord Jesus can only possibly be answered and fulfilled as the Lord's people become a heavenly people, and He says quite clearly that that does not mean that you literally have to leave the earth. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." "They are not of the world." It is not a literal leaving of the world. No, it is a spiritual and inward detachment and separation from the standards of this world as actuating and governing the minds, the ideas, the conceptions, of Christian people. You come down to earth, and you can extend I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Peter, I am of Wesley. How many people can you mention by name? This all belongs to the same realm; it is earthly.

The Measure of Christ in Christians the Measure of Unity

The only possible way of dealing with this matter is to take the ground of Christ in heaven, and as Paul says in the second letter, "We henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh" - and the Corinthians did that. "I am of Christ", making Christ a part of it. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so *no more*" (2 Cor. 5:16). We know Christ after the Spirit, the heavenly Man, and our attitude towards all Christians is of that kind. We have knowledge of one another in so far as Christ is present in one another. It is the measure of Christ that creates unity. We go on just so far as Christ is dominant and pre-eminent and ascendant. When we cease to be Christ, or when it ceases to be Christ, and we begin to take up something else, we cannot go any further. We say, "I go with you so long as we meet the Lord in one another, but if you are going down that lane, we cannot go any further".

Disunity Among Christians a Victory for Satan

But remember, this is a tremendous challenge this whole question of spiritual oneness and unity. If you are concerned about it at all, and so much depends upon it, do remember that the soul of man is the playground of Satan. It is not just that Christians are divided, it is that Satan has got what he is after. He is in that way neutralising the very object for which Christ died: "By this shall all men know..." (John 13:35). You must remember that it will be a Body in perfect oneness which at the end will oust the whole hierarchy of Satan from the heavens, and division among the Lord's people is Satan's way of postponing that, hindering that, fighting against that. And that division and disunity is satanic in its source, it is something more than just misunderstanding.

We have so often said these things here, but let me remind you that if Satan can do it simply, he would sooner do it that way, because it does not betray him. If he can just in a simple way bring division between some of the Lord's people so that they are really able to put it down to simple causes and say, "There is nothing very satanic about that", it is simply that that serves Satan's end most suitably. He can hide himself behind simple things and upset Christians in their relationships by petty little things which cannot, on the face of it, be said to be a movement of hell. It suits him very much. If he cannot do it simply, he will do it by very much more drastic means, and he will carry this thing higher and higher, so that if it is not possible to bring about division between Christians by simple means behind which he is hidden, that do not manifest the imprint of his mischievous hand, he will go right up to the place where, not being able to do it along those ordinary simple lines, he will carry it into a realm where it is so utterly spiritual that you cannot track it. You only know that something has happened, and between you and another, or between the Lord's people, something has come about, a strain, a distance. You cannot say it is for this reason or that, you cannot put it down to

anything at all. We have not quarrelled; we have not had any kind of misunderstanding; it is not because of this or that yet here it is: somehow or other there's a strained relatedness, or unrelatedness. Satan will follow it through like that and create a situation which is altogether unreal and untrue to practical lines of reasoning, but he will do it. Do take this to heart; it is so important if God's end is to be reached - that is, conformity to Christ, the fulness of Christ, that Christ shall be all in all, we must lay this to heart.

Earthliness Makes for Divisions

And so it is necessary for us to get off of and get further and further away from earthly ground. The plots of the powers of evil, the divisive spirits, are countless in this matter. Do you not see that it is so often when the enemy has got the Lord's people tied up with some earthly things that you will soon begin to get quarrels? Difficulties arise over the earthly things. Satan will get you involved in some earthly responsibility, some earthly liability, some temporal matters, get you taken up with some matter of machinery and organisation, the earthly side of things, and then difficulties arise, and the thing becomes burdensome and problematic and then you are going to look round for a scapegoat - and it is because So-and-so did this! Blame is going to be attached somewhere. He has got you onto earthly ground, and is going to shatter your unity by getting people involved in earthly things.

I am trying to show you that any kind of involvement in the earthly things provides the enemy with a ground for bringing about this thing of discord and strain. We have to be very careful how we allow ourselves to become involved in earthly things, how we take up earthly things as Christians. There may be some snare, some snag, in it. The enemy is presently going to bring about some trouble along that line. Simplicity of life, so far as this world is concerned, is the safest way.

Well, this is all within the compass of this letter to the Corinthians. Here is somebody who has some property. Another Christian is also involved, and here is this earthly business affair of this world. One of these people defaults in some way, or asserts some self-interest. The other Christian goes to law. Paul says, "Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before unbelievers" (1 Cor. 6:6). That is an extreme case, but it illustrates what I mean. Christians involved in something, then misunderstanding or personal interest arising in some way, and then proceeding to get your rights secured unto you. It does not matter about the church, it does not matter about the Name of the Lord, you must have your rights established. The church can be split from top to bottom.

The Need to Keep on Heavenly Ground

The Lord Jesus, the heavenly Man, never allowed Himself for one moment to become involved in things on this earth. He lived an extremely simple life. It saves a lot of trouble. I know that may raise some problems for some of you, but I am simply trying to emphasise the point. We must abide on the ground of Christ as He is known after the Spirit, as the heavenly Man, as the One who is not down here like other men if there is going to be this triumph of spiritual life. If we are going to get down there on the level of man and allow our reactions to people's attitudes and conduct towards us to be the reactions of an earthly man - they give us something, we give them equal or better in word or in deed - if we are coming down on any level like that, to get even, to be even, to stand for our rights and so on, we are violating the very principle of our new birth, we are going against our being born from above. The whole New Testament says that. And you will be reproached, but you are not to reproach; you will be slandered, but you are not to answer back. You are not to meet the flesh with the flesh, the earth with the earth. You have to keep your position. Peter said, "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20). Keep on heavenly ground.

Only the Heavenly can be Spoken to as Heavenly

Now I want to gather all this up. There is much more in this letter. But I want to sum it up in this way. The proof of earthliness is found in what the Spirit says and in the fact that He has to say it. The fact that this letter to the Corinthians is composed of what is here is itself a proof of the state of the Corinthians. The Holy Spirit speaks according to what He knows to be the state of things. Ministry in the Holy Spirit will always betray the state of the people. You literally cannot speak of some things in the Holy Spirit among some people, "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). In the letter to the Hebrews, you have something similar about Melchizedek - "of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:11). "You are not in a state", the writer says, "to hear them". Think of what is held back of Divine revelation because of a spiritual condition! And here the apostle says - "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9,10). "And I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual" - there was limitation imposed upon ministry and revelation by the spiritual condition.

On the other hand, is it not a grand thing when the Holy Spirit is free to give in fulness with no restraint and the deep things of God can all come out! It shows that there is a state ready, there is an opportunity presented. The very fact that this letter has in it what it has in it, betrays the state of this people. How the Lord speaks, that He has to say things like this, just shows what the people are like. Take, for instance, one point. This letter is full of it. Take 1 Corinthians 13, the great classic on love. There is nothing like it on love in all the Bible, not because these people were so loving that the Lord could speak to them like that about love, but because they were so *un*loving. He had to set over against their spiritual condition something which contrasted with their spiritual state. He has to speak like this, and anybody would go down before this revelation of love. Break it up, and every one of us would have to go down on our knees and say, "That finds me out!" "Love suffereth long, and is kind." That is not Corinth, in the light of all that has been said up to this point. "Suffereth long... But you go to law against one another! Love envieth not... is not puffed up by worldly wisdom. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own." Any of those fragments will find anyone out, but how it will find out the Corinthians!

Turn over to the letters to the Thessalonians, and what have you there? "The love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth" (2 Thess. 1:3). "We need not to speak anything (1 Thess. 1:8), everybody is speaking about you, your love aboundeth, is known in all the church". It is a different way of speaking about love, it shows the state of the people. If you can say, "Your love aboundeth and everybody knows about it" there is a good state there. If you have to say, "Love envieth not... is not puffed up... seeketh not its own", it is disclosing a state.

Christ Presented According to Need

The form in which Christ is presented is according to opportunity given. That is another axiom, another truth. How is He presented in the first letter to the Corinthians? "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). "The *word* of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18). You know that word "word" there is 'logos', not just a part of speech. It is the word that is used by John: "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God... And the *Word* became flesh" (John 1:1,14). That is the word Paul used here, the *Logos* of the Cross. Christ is presented as crucified, the Cross; and then corporately, "There is one body, one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). That is how Christ is presented to the Corinthians. That is all the opportunity that they give for the presentation of Christ. He will be presented in other

ways to other people. Compare the presentation of Christ to the Colossians. There is nothing in all the Bible to compare with Colossians 1, or again, Philippians 2. How marvellous the presentation of Christ is. But here it has to be Christ crucified. What an indictment of spiritual condition!

Heavenly Revelation Calls for Heavenly Ground

What does this mean? It means this, that if we want all that God would have us have, if we desire to see Christ as God would reveal Him to us, and to give to us all which lies within the compass of those words, "Things which eye saw not, and ear has heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him", we have to give God opportunity for it, and the only opportunity is to take heavenly ground. You get heavenly revelation if you take heavenly ground; you get a full and glorious presentation of Christ if you take the ground of Christ, the heavenly Man.

It is our position which determines how far we go on, how much the Lord will give us. So let us ask the Lord, "Lord, am I proceeding on the ground of man? My way of speaking - is that man's way of speaking? My way of conduct - is it man's way of conduct? My reactions to what I meet - is that how man does it? Am I on that low level? Well, I shall not get very far." We have to come at things from above, not from beneath, and if so, then there is no hindrance to going right on. The Lord commits Himself to the heavenly Man as He will not to the earthly. May the Lord explain this to us in our hearts!

Chapter 5 - The Crisis of Transition from the Earthly to the Heavenly

Reading: 1 Cor. 15:45-49; Gen. 32:9-12, 24-31; 35:9-15; 46:29-30; 50:7,8,10.

We have been occupied with the matter of the displacing of the earthly man to give place to the heavenly Man. I shall say very little, if anything, about what has gone before. This that we have before us is in itself a concise presentation of that very thing.

We read that portion in 1 Cor. 15, "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven", and we noted the statement that there is to be a transition from the one to the other in our case.

Jacob's Life Divided into Two at Peniel

Now in these verses which we have read from the book of Genesis, putting together these fragments, we have compassed the life of Jacob and the great transition which took place in that life from Jacob to Israel, from the first man of the earth to the second man of heaven. Jacob's life is distinctly divided into two - that of Jacob and that of Israel - divided at Jabbok, at Peniel, on that great, eventful, critical night.

Jacob represents self-government. Peniel represents self-dethronement. Israel means God-governed. Those three words or phrases sum up the whole of these two sides of life: the earthly man and the heavenly Man, with a great crisis between. We are not dealing with an unsaved man, although what we are going to say can apply to such in some respects. We are dealing in type and figure with a man of God, the one who stands closely related to Divine purpose and the sovereign choice, the sovereign election, the sovereign grace of God.

We have seen from the letters to the Romans and to the Corinthians that there are two sides to the life of a child of God: the Jacob side and the Israel side. There is the side of the earthly man and the side of the heavenly Man with such as are already vitally related to God through sovereign grace and election.

Jacob Wanted God's Best

I want to be as concise as possible, so first of all, with what I have just said as the basis, let me point out that Jacob, as Jacob, was a man or the man who wanted God's best. Whatever you have to say about his character and about his conduct, if you go right inside of Jacob you find that, misguided as he was, he wanted God's best. That could not be said of his brother Esau who despised God's best. Jacob had this drawing towards God's best. He knew what the birthright signified for himself, for his posterity. He saw something of the sovereign counsels of God. He had some measure of perception and apprehension of the great purposes of God, and he set himself in the direction of possessing them and entering into them. He wanted God's best. He had some sense, some intimation, that he was called into the great sovereign purpose of God and into God's promise in connection therewith. That is where we begin with this man, leaving aside what that purpose was so far as Israel, that is, the nation, was concerned, I think we can begin.

From the Beginning Jacob had a Sense of Purpose

Undoubtedly there are not a few in this gathering who want God's best, who have said so to Him, who at some time or other have glimpsed that God has a great purpose, and that purpose concerns them. They have heard the phrases of the New Testament - "called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28), and they have in their hearts responded and have said, "Yes, I want all God's purpose to be realised where my life is concerned, I want to be in the good of the eternal purpose". You have had some sense that God really has the meaning of a great eternal purpose bound up with your life, or your life is bound up with it. I leave it for you to say whether that is so or not in your own heart, but I venture to think it is true. You have had this either presented in a message or through reading the Word, or it has come to you in some way, at some time, that God has a great purpose, that you are somehow included in it, and you have said, "I want all that God wants; I want God's best". But that may have been some years ago. While the sense of it still remains, the truth of it abides, this desire has not faded, you are still in that attitude, that position. It is some time back, and you do not seem to be getting there.

Jacob had that experience. At the beginning, God intimated it to him, he knew that it was wrapped up in the birthright. He heard in his dream that night the voice of God above the ladder. He had this, he knew this twenty years ago, and he is not in it yet, it is not maturing, the whole thing is under arrest; there is delay, there is frustration. All that he was led to believe that meant, is not coming into experience; something about it is not satisfying, the situation does not answer to expectation, he is not getting there.

Delay in the Realisation of the Purpose

In John's gospel, where we are dwelling so much, immediately after we have got past the Cross at the end of chapter 3 the Son of Man is lifted up, and in spiritual meaning the man of earth has been set aside in the Cross; the Nicodemus earthly man of frustration and defeat and limitation, hopelessness, he has in figure been taken to the Cross of the Son of Man. The very next thing is Jacob's well: "He (Jesus) must needs pass through Samaria" (John 4:4), "So He cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar... and Jacob's well was there" (v.5,6). And then you know all that happens at Jacob's well, "Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well?" (v.12) The greater than Jacob is here. "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (v.14). You have heard that, you have read that, you have hoped for that, and you have felt that that is the thing that will answer. If only there is within you the open well springing up, the living water flowing forth from within, that wonderful satisfaction that the woman of Sychar did not know for the first half of her life, but came to know through Him who was greater than Jacob, the true Israel of God. You want that. If only this well within were a reality - but it is delayed, it is deferred, it is under arrest; with all your wistfulness, hope and belief that that is God's purpose; it does not mature. Time goes on, you are not there. Jacob for twenty years tarried between the hope, the expectation, the mental apprehension, the vision, the inward assurance that that was God's will - and the realisation.

Defeat and Failure Because of Self-government

Delay, but more than delay - defeat and failure. Look what occupied the twenty years. Yes, God in a way was blessing, was prospering him in temporal ways, was standing by him in many situations, but there are a lot of things during those twenty years that do not speak of the heavenly Man by any means, and do not indicate that Jacob is getting on very well spiritually. The spiritual side of things is very limited, very much held up by delay, defeat, disappointment, all because it is still Jacob self-

governed, the man who is governing his own life and whose interest in heavenly things has a self-ward direction; the man who has his hand upon his own life and wants to realise himself. So he tricks Laban. So he bargains with God. There is, right at the heart of everything after all, this deeply-rooted, not always perceived, but ever dominant self-direction, self-government, self-interest, wanting spiritual things to bring him somewhere as Jacob, to realise his visions as Jacob - albeit in relation to God.

Defeat and failure may be because of this, that which you and I are not prepared to admit or perhaps we cannot see, but it is there. God sees it, God knows it. While the first thing is true, that we are the called according to His purpose and that our lives through sovereign grace have been apprehended by God unto a great heavenly purpose, and there has been a registration in us of our desire to have God's best, delay like this has some reason. There is a reason for it, a cause, an explanation.

The Lord will not Commit Himself to Jacob

I hope you are remembering John 2:24,25-3:1: "Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man. Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus", and he is one of the men to whom the Lord Jesus will not commit Himself. Are you wondering why the Lord is not committing Himself, why the Lord is so limited in your life, why the Lord is not just going on? He knows what is in man, and He knows the place, the measure, the strength that the self-interest principle has in us, and it is the most dangerous thing to the interests of God. He will not commit Himself to it, for if He did, then our flesh would glory in His presence. There is an explanation, and it is in some way this Jacob, the government of self, the strength of self.

The Lord Precipitates a Crisis

Well, what is going to happen? Something has got to happen. This cannot go on indefinitely. You say, "This cannot go on indefinitely, this is a contradiction! This raises fundamental questions as to the very truth of all that I have believed and accepted as to whether God is faithful to those who want to be really out and out. We cannot go on like this. It cannot be God who is at fault; we dismiss that. Then it must be me. There are only two parties in this - God and you and me, and this cannot go on". I may only be speaking to some who really do know that something has got to happen or disappointment and tragedy will mark the life. What is going to happen? Why has God put this word right in our midst? May it not be that God is doing what He did with Jacob? He precipitated the crisis Himself. He said, 'Now is the time, now is the hour, we are going to have a settlement on this matter here and now.' "And there wrestled a man with him" (Gen. 32:24). God precipitated, God took the initiative, and said, 'Now then, we are not going on like this any longer, it is going to happen tonight before the day breaks.' God has taken this step. But Hosea 12:3 tells us it was God who wrestled with Jacob and Jacob came to that conclusion, "I have seen God face to face" (Gen. 32:30). The heavenly Man has come on the scene to deal with the earthly man. "There wrestled a man with him", a heavenly Man. God has come down in the likeness of man to deal with the earthly man, to get rid of him, to put him out of the way, to take his place. Is-ra-el - El is God. God precipitated.

Jacob's Positive Reaction

But then you know that there are always two sides to a crisis. While God said, in effect, 'The time has come, this has gone on long enough, you have looked for this day, now it has come', Jacob was swift to recognise this was the time, God was on the move, and he came into it, he engaged in this matter with God very definitely. The one thing (if this is your position) that might defeat God's end, even

though He may move towards you in this hour, one thing which may make this whole thing abortive may be passivity, "Oh, if anything is going to happen, the Lord must do it; I will sit and wait for the Lord to do it all!" Passivity may defeat it all. Did not the Lord Jesus say, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence (permitteth of violence), and men of violence take it by force" (Matt. 11:12), indicating that there is another side to this matter? We are not going to inherit anything by works, that is not what is being talked about, but there is this side of coming in with God, taking up the matter with God, recognising that now is God's time for settling the issue.

Jacob entered into and laid hold, and said, "I will not let Thee go." God said, "Let Me go, for the day breaketh." "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." You must understand that God is acting a part. When He asked Jacob his name, do you not think that God knew what his name was? Of course! Why does He say, "Let Me go, for the day breaketh." Will this man let Him go? Will He not extend this man to the full, see if he really does mean business, prove that this man is so set upon the blessing, that he will not give it up easily. He has asked for the blessing; will he let it pass, let it go, be put off? God is going to try him right out over this. He prevails with God, but not by his strength, not because he is greater than God, and not by sheer force or determination.

Jacob's Self-strength Touched by God

He prevails with God in this way - by importunity, his refusal to accept less than all that God meant, and he knows God now. So he enters in, he is fully extended, and then to show that with all his strength and all his determination, that that is not the ground on which he is going to be blessed, God touches the sinew of his thigh, and he is a lame, maimed man for the rest of his life. Just a touch of God, and all his strength is gone. Yes, his self-strength is touched at last. There is no virtue in his strength. He has shown God that he means business, but he has not got blessing by his own self-strength. He is touched by the finger of God, and for evermore he is a weakened man and he knows his weakness to his dying day; he went limping for the rest of his life. That will of Jacob's is the will of the earthly man. That will of the flesh, that will of the soul, is broken. That is the point of the trouble. Jacob thought he could do anything by his own strength, his own cunning, wedded to a persistent will; he could have anything, do anything, get anywhere. He is touched in the heart of his self-life, and for evermore that self-life is known to be crippled. That is the focal point of the transition.

Jacob's Shattered Self-confidence and Self-esteem

"What is thy name?", asks God. Listen! "What is thy name?" "Jacob - Supplanter - Trickster". He had to admit, confess, and acknowledge what he was by nature. Jacob! I do not think he answered God very jubilantly. He had to come to the place where Esau looms into view and all that Jacob the Supplanter meant twenty years before where Esau was concerned, comes up as a terrible shadow and threat, right into his consciousness. Esau was coming with his four hundred men to greet his brother, but for Jacob it was the most awful prospect because of his awareness that he is Jacob, the Supplanter. There is nothing good about that name. It had to be divulged what he is by nature. "What is thy name?"

Now then, are you a very fine person? What do you think of yourself, what are you going to say about yourself before God, what is your testimony of yourself now in the presence of God? We have to come down to a very low place where our very name, which is our nature, is something we are not a bit proud of. We may have been able to outwit our Labans, we may have been able to do a lot of things successfully in this world, we may have been something among men, but in the presence of God, what are we now? This is the crisis where we are brought to the place where we abhor

ourselves, and admit that our name is Jacob. Are you already there?

Are you a successful person in this world, in your business, in your profession, in your affairs? You have usually been able to get what you set your mind on having, been able to wangle it somehow; you never take "No" as an answer. But now there is no obtaining by scheming, no getting round things in God's presence. What are we in the presence of God? 'My name is Jacob.' All right, you have come down there, have you? You are broken in your will, broken in your soul-force, humbled, ashamed, knowing that you can never get through to God's best with all your desire, or by any other resource than God Himself. You know that you must die, that Jacob must be buried. You know that there will be the marks of an awful crippling upon that soul self-life.

"No more Jacob, but Israel"

If you are there - "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Is-ra-el." No longer self-governed because self-deposed. Now God has the government of our life. The thing that was a horror to you, the Esau and his four hundred, and all that which you dreaded has turned into a blessing. It has passed, and now under the sovereign hand of God, has turned to your good. You come to Bethel and you are able to pour out something to the pleasure of God. You were never able to do that before, to bring a drink-offering into the house of the Lord. And then the Lord speaks and says, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 35:11). It is a new prospect: heavenly fruitfulness. The well is open, heavenly fruitfulness is possible now.

Satisfied with Christ

The next picture we came to was of Israel being brought to Joseph, Joseph coming to meet Israel his father, and the words from Israel to Joseph - "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive" (Gen. 46:30). Joseph is a beautiful type of Christ exalted, and Israel has come to the place in the spirit of the great Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in perfect satisfaction. Christ is exalted, and Jacob is contented because Christ is exalted. "Now let me die." Oh, this restless, discontented, striving man, this man of care has come to contentment and satisfaction, and now it is not because he has got somewhere and got something, but because this other one is alive. Satisfied with Christ, self removed, Christ on the throne; satisfied.

Glory to God Through Israel

And then (and what a different end it might have been) the next picture. Israel dies and is buried, but oh, what a burial, what a picture of honour to Israel. Everybody comes, everybody mourns with great mourning and lamentation for this one for whom they were so grateful. Thank God for Israel, thank God for what He did in that man's life, thank God for the great transition and transformation, thank God for all the fruit that has come from that life! There was great mourning. It is an honourable burial. Jacob might have passed out in dishonour but for Peniel. He passed out in honour and glory because of Peniel.

Do you want to come to restful contentment? Do you want to come to an end where people can say, "Thank God for the remembrance of So-and-so, their life meant something very much of the Lord. When you met them, you saw the work of grace, you saw what God can do in a life! It is a pity they have gone, the earth is the poorer for their departure!" We are not wrong and it is not selfish, to desire that. Do you not hope, I do, that when we have gone people will say, well, not, "Good riddance!" but, "Now the world is the poorer, there is something less of the Lord, something less of the heavenly Man here". That will be to the glory of God, and it all hinges upon this - the crisis in the

life of the child of God where that self-strength, self-will still unbroken and unshattered, and that ability still to stand up and be erect, has met its match and master in God, and has been broken with all the wonderful consequences of being broken.

Are you a broken man or woman, a broken Christian? Has the self-strength been maimed? Do you know that you cannot go upright in your own strength? Do you know that your own soul is marked by the finger of God and marked down to impotence, that you dare not, cannot, assert yourself in the old way? It turns upon the Cross. "I have been crucified with Christ... it is no longer I... but Christ" (Gal. 2:20). The earthly man has passed out, the heavenly Man has taken his place. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven."

Chapter 6 - The Meekness of the Heavenly Man

We have, in the earlier six gatherings of this Conference [we do not have the sixth message] been led to contemplate that great Divine thought and intention in having man constituted after God's own heart. With that intention, God proceeded with the creation and coming to man, said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). So He proceeded and produced the first of that race which was intended by Him to bring Him perfect satisfaction. But we saw that man was marred; then God, through the link of faith with a chain of men down the centuries, shows in each of those men some glimmer of His thought. Each one of them revealed through His in-working some constituent (among many of the marks of that marring and spoiling and traces of the works of the devil) of the man that God was after, but all of them coming short of perfection. Then in the fulness of the times, God sent His own Son, made of a woman, the incarnation by which the heavenly Man was introduced into this world.

He came, as we saw, to do two things. First, to put the former man out, to bring him to an end, and then through the Cross to establish the second Man, the last Adam, in his place. And all God's concern and all the concern of every believer should be this: the formation of man according to Christ, the bringing of Christ in His nature, His manhood, into fulness personally and corporately in His body, the church. Our main emphasis is upon the nature of what God is, therefore, from the beginning, seeking to realise, that heaven's verdict upon our having been here on this earth as Christians will be entirely a matter of how much Christ has been here because we have been here; not the many things that Christians are often occupied with as objective things, but just how much the Lord Jesus has been here because we were here.

Now we shall spend this time in contemplating this heavenly Man who has come in and who has come to stay, and whom God is with, whom God has established forever, who is going right through to God's end. We are to look at Him. We shall not see all. If we only see one thing, and that one thing comes to us through the eyes of our hearts and therefore makes for conformity to His likeness, our meditation is not in vain.

Pride the Point at which the First Man was Marred

We come then, to look at the heavenly Man to whom it is the intention of God to conform us, and apart from which conformity, our Christianity has no meaning and we have failed. So we have to start with the second Man, the last Adam, the heavenly Man, at the point where the former man was marred, where Satan did his basic work, for this Son of God as Son of man was manifested to destroy the works of the devil and those works are primarily in man. We have to see that the Lord Jesus, in incarnation, started right at the point where Satan's works were done in man, where the first man was marred, and at what point was that? There is one word which includes the whole range of satanic works, but which is the root of all the works of Satan, and that word is pride. We know from what the Scriptures tell us that it was when pride was found in his heart that the great rift and rupture took place between God and that covering cherub Lucifer, that "Son of the Morning". "Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty" (Ezekiel 28:17), pride was found in his heart. We know that he lost everything of his dominion and his rulership through pride. He lost his glory, he lost his place with God, through pride. And, in order to rob the first Adam of his Divinely appointed and intended

destiny as ruler over the creation, to spoil God's work, it was just on that particular point that he commenced: the question of pride - that is the original sin and is where Adam failed.

I am not going to stay to analyse the temptation and the fall. It is perfectly clear it was a matter of pride. It was a revolt against being less than Satan suggested he might be. Through pride, Satan fell, and through pride, Adam fell, and it is the basis and root of all sin. If we were capable of understanding and knowing and apprehending, we should be able to trace pride in some way through all our troubles.

The Meekness of the Heavenly Man

It was there that the second Man, in order to destroy the works of the devil in man, in order to put aside the earthly man, that the heavenly Man began, and the one great, all-comprehensive word about Him is *meekness*. Meekness was found in Him, even before He came here into this scene. Being on an equality with God, He thought it not something to be grasped or to be held on to; He emptied Himself, becoming in the form of a man (Phil. 2:6-7). You see His beginnings. There is no proud, ostentatious entry into this humanity and this world among men. There is nothing whatever that this world would take account of according to its own standards. His beginnings are in the utmost meekness. It is not just a pretty story of the stable and the manger and no room in the inn and all the humble circumstances. It is a Divine principle at work, the mightiest principle in God's universe now for the destroying of the very works of the devil. God is getting right down to the roots of things. There is nothing here to make an impression, nothing impressive from the world's standpoint. Yes, spiritual forces are in operation, heaven is active, but no miracles to see that He has a propitious beginning. It is all very simple. He has entered in in meekness - mighty, and to the kingdom of Satan it is terrible - meekness.

Then, as He comes out before us in full manhood, we are able to mark His stand against the spirit of this world and its god, which is the spirit of pride, the spirit of fleshly glory, the spirit of natural impossibility. What a stand He made against the spirit of this world, and that spirit of this world which had invaded Israel, the Jewish nation in its worst form, for the worst form of pride is spiritual pride. He found His greatest antagonism in the realm where spiritual pride was seated and rooted among the Jewish rulers. They would not have Him because He did not come up to standard according to their worldly ideas. He annoyed and provoked them because of His utter otherworldliness. Their ideas were worldly ideas. The most scathing things that He ever said were said in connection with spiritual pride. The Pharisee went up to the temple, lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "I thank Thee that I am not as the rest of men... I do this, I do that..." and so on (Luke 18:9-12); spiritual pride. And to them He said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (John 8:44). You cannot get further back than that and deeper than that, and He simply meant that pride, the pride of Lucifer, is the actuating motive of everything. "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another?" (John 5:44).

But note, it was not what He said, it was what He was. He was the contrast. We can talk about pride and talk about humility or meekness. The real power is not in what is said; it is in the person, what the person is. He was the contrast in Himself.

Obedience the Hallmark of Meekness

Then we are told by the apostle that after emptying and humbling Himself, He became obedient. If there is one thing that is the hallmark of meekness, it is obedience. The apostle says "obedient unto death", and then He adds - "yea, the death of the cross". Could there be anything more humbling?

Could there be anything more demanding and requiring more meekness than to be obedient unto the death of the cross? We might be willing to be obedient unto death if it could be the glorious death of a martyr who would be conspicuously, manifestly, laying down his life in a glorious way. The cross to the Jew was the very synonym for being cursed of God, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). To the Roman this was degradation, when the Roman idea is one of strength; their whole idea of manhood was strength and to be crucified meant utter weakness and denial of everything in manhood - shame, degradation. To the Greek it was foolishness, a contradiction of all wisdom, "To think you are going to get anywhere by being crucified! If you are going to be successful, you will never go to a cross!" "Obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross". Can meekness go further than that? No! Well, this is the Man that God is with. This is the Man according to God's eternal thought. This is the Man who is destroying the works of the devil in His own manhood. This is the Man who is going right back to the very root of all satanic activity and rules it out in His manhood, and He is doing it by meekness.

He is not assailing the works of the devil objectively. He is getting down to them subjectively, He is dealing with them in their nature. He goes to the cause, before He touches the effect. It is the very essence of things. The works of the devil are not just the things that have come from the devil, but the reason why they have come, and the reason is pride, and this Son of Man is destroying those works in their nature, in their essence, by meekness.

God Committed Himself to the Lord Jesus on the Ground of His Meekness

That is why the Father committed Himself to the Son. We have quoted so often in this series John 2:24-25 - "Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man." But God has committed Himself to this Man, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matt. 17:5). God was with Him, God committed Himself to Him, to the Son. "The Father hath given all things into His (the Son's) hand" (John 3:35). And He did so; He committed Himself and all things to Him sheerly and purely on the ground of His meekness. Sometimes God cannot commit Himself to us because of our pride. There is no doubt about it, the least little blessing that the Lord gives us and up comes old Adam and begins to glory. Oh, how pleased we are, how gratified we are if something nice is said about us or about something we have said or done. And how little do we go down in meltedness of heart and tears, and thank God that ever He should have been able to say or do something through us that was a help. God cannot commit Himself. We are little used because it is not safe. We are so little blessed because it is not safe. We at once get into the picture. God could commit all things to the Son, and God could commit Himself to Him without the slightest fear, with no reserve, because of His meekness.

Moses a Foreshadowing of Christ in His Meekness

Moses is a beautiful type foreshadowing this one particular thing. We said that each link in the chain of men represented some feature of this heavenly Man, and it says about Moses, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). Well, there you see his outstanding, distinguishing characteristic and the result was, "The Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33:11). He did not speak to him by an intermediary; He did not speak to him - as the word literally is there - in parables, "dark speeches" (Num. 12:8); He spoke openly face to face. What a thing to be able to say about a man! The Lord spoke to Moses mouth to mouth (Numbers 12:8). But you have to put the two things together, "Now the man Moses was very meek." Then the Lord revealed to Moses the whole heavenly pattern. Moses

had an open heaven, a full, clear and very detailed revelation from God Himself of the things in the heavens. "Now the man Moses was very meek." The two things go together. The day came when in his own family circle, his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam are evidently talking somewhere aside. The spirit of pride and jealousy rose up, and they began to talk disparagingly about their brother Moses, "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only with Moses? He is taking too much on himself." Somewhere out of earshot this secret conspiracy was going on. God heard, overheard, and God came down and said, "You three come out here, appear before Me at the door of the tent". God took up the case of Moses. The meekness of Moses became the awful terror of Aaron and Miriam. It was the ground on which God called them to account in the most solemn and terrible way. God vindicated Moses because he "was very meek".

The Lord Jesus: Meek and Lowly in Heart

It is just a faint foreshadowing of this One who, far more than Moses, at far greater cost than Moses, was meek and lowly in heart. Did God speak with Him face to face? "The Father hath given all things into His hand". Has God disclosed to Him His eternal counsels? Oh yes! Has God vindicated Him? Why, you know there was a day when His own brethren after the flesh called Him into question, and the apostolic writer says - "Even His brethren did not believe on Him" (John 7:5). But you find them among the apostles later on calling Him Lord, the Lord Jesus; one of His own brethren after the flesh saying about his Brother, "The *Lord* Jesus". You see the way of meekness, its importance with God, and its undercutting power where Satan's works are. So He was able to say with every right: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in *heart*" (Matt. 11:29).

True Meekness is of the Heart

I can quite visualise that we will take this in all sincerity and good meaning, and then we will go away and say, "We are going to be meek!" and we will put it on! We will begin to talk in a certain way that we think is a meek way of talking; we will begin to say things that we think are very meek things. We begin to behave and to look very meek. Beware! Satan will just get what he is after and spoil the whole thing. "Meek... *in heart*." It is not something put on, not something from the outside, not the tone in which we speak - a miserable tone, thinking it sounds meek. It is not when we begin to use self-depreciating words about ourselves, talking about what poor things we are, letting people know that we feel we are the worst of everything. That is not meekness. There are a lot of other things that could be imitation meekness. Now, I do not believe that if we had met Jesus in the days of His flesh we would have met anything like that, a poor whining tone. I do not believe He went about whining, and I do not believe that He ever said anything about Himself as to what a poor creature and specimen He was. I do not believe for one moment that He drew attention to Himself in that way. I believe we should have found a man every bit a man, with nothing to despise so far as His manhood or His speech were concerned.

He was meek and lowly in *heart*, and only God knows the heart, and God can read through all our make-believe. I am not saying that you have to go away and try to be meek and put on meekness. I am saying that you have got to be conformed to Christ, and you have to put yourselves into the hands of the Spirit of God to do it, and when He does it, or begins to do it, don't begin to kick. This, as we said in a previous meditation, is going to be a deep heart formation, very deep down in the heart - no make-believe, no mockery with God, but reality. We shall be stripped of our pride and everything that accounts for our pride, all that which would in any way make us think something of ourselves and deceive ourselves. "If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3). That does not mean that if any particular man thinks himself to be something

when he is nothing, he deceives himself, that means about *all* men that if any believe they are something when they are nothing, they deceive themselves.

All that deception is going to be destroyed. It is pride that is at the root of deception. Adam was deceived, but it was his pride that deceived him. There is nothing more deceiving than pride. Oh, the foolishness of it! You have only to look down upon men from a high enough standpoint, and all the cause of pride has gone. You have only got to go ten thousand feet up in a plane and look down on the earth and see men like ants crawling about, and yet marvellous beings in their own eyes. Get God's standpoint of these men who strut about the earth thinking themselves to be something. What are they from God's standpoint? "When he is nothing, deceiving himself." The Lord Jesus was not deceived in that way. He was meek and lowly in heart.

Some Characteristics of Meekness

Where shall we begin or end when we begin to speak about meekness? Oh, how different meekness is in its whole behaviour when you look at it in the case of the Lord Jesus. Well, meekness in Him found no revengefulness, "When He was reviled, (He) reviled not again" (1 Peter 2:23). When they said evil things about Him, there was no revengeful attitude, no revengeful spirit, "He gave His back to the smiters" (Isa. 50:6). He did not come back to get even. There is nothing revengeful about meekness. Meekness is never offended. It is pride that is offended. But how few of us can be talked to straightly and have things pointed out to us that are painfully amiss and doing harm, and take it meekly and not be offended or show offendedness! Meekness is not offended. Remember this.

Meekness has no airs; it is not superior. Read John 13 again. "Ye call Me your Teacher and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:13-14). In the form of a bondservant, laying aside His garments, taking a towel and a basin, pouring water into it, and washing the disciples' feet. This is not some act of condescension. This is Himself. It is not put on and He is not acting. It is Himself, it is His Spirit. So we could go on, and on, analysing meekness.

We have not been talking about meekness. The subject was the heavenly Man. This may be one outstanding, or it may be an inclusive feature, of the heavenly Man, but you see we started this series with the phrase "born from above". "Ye must be born from above", and you know quite well that you do not have somebody who is born, and then begin to stick virtues on to them afterward. It is what they are *born with* coming out. "Born from above" means that this is inherent in what is from above. It is that, it is a very part of our birth; it may be immature, not very much developed, but it is what is there by the work of the Spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). He is the Spirit of meekness. I would set meekness as the supreme feature of what is from above.

What remains then, as we close for the moment, is that we should really have dealings with the Lord about this. We are not going through to God's end, we are not going to pass on and even leave this world a success from heaven's standpoint, unless supremely, in all, through all, this Spirit of the heavenly Man has marked us with the Spirit of meekness. It will in itself determine how much of the work of the devil has been destroyed in manhood; the measure of Christ in terms of meekness. Recognise the importance of this.

It is Christ, no less than Christ, and all the mighty meaning of Christ as the Firstborn among many brethren, as the beginning of that race, that manhood, that humanity, which eventually is to reach God's appointed destiny and fulfil God's eternally determined purpose in this universe. All is bound up, to begin with, with this matter of meekness.

We shall not, in this series, have time to speak on other features of the heavenly Man, but if this one thing takes hold of our hearts, something will have been done which will carry with it many, many other things and open the way for the Lord to do very much more.

Chapter 7 - The Man in Glory

Reading: Ezekiel 1:26; Acts 7:55; Heb. 2:5-10; Phil. 2:8-11.

We come to the third and final phase of the matter which has been holding our attention in this series of messages - that which is born from above.

In the first place, we saw the fact that the coming of the Lord Jesus in the form of a man was God's introducing into the creation the Man to whom He would conform man, man as God ultimately intended Him to be when He created man, and that the Lord Jesus supplants and disposes of the first man. And then God takes up the work of making Christ a corporate Man, bringing His children by faith into the full measure of the stature of Christ.

In the second place, we have just taken a glance at that Man to see something of what He is like, the kind of man God has in view. We have not gone very far with that, but I think we have gone far enough to make us aware that He is a very different man from all others, and that conformity to Him does represent a tremendous work.

Now we come to the third and final phase: the Man in the glory. "The heavenly vision" as Paul called it (Acts 26:19), referring to that objective and subjective revelation of Christ which came to him when on his way to Damascus he saw Jesus of Nazareth in heavenly glory and which had a subjective effect to which he referred when he said, "It was the good pleasure of God... to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1:15-16). It was not just a vision by the way. It was an inward impress, a mighty inward revelation, not only of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, but something very much more than that, as we are now going to see.

The Man on the Throne in the Glory

These passages which we have read are just a selection from a number of others like them, bringing into view the Man in the glory, that same Man. Ezekiel said that he was with the captives at the river Chebar, and he saw visions of God (Ezek. 1:1). When he began to describe the visions of God, he headed them right up to this that we have read: "Above the firmament was the likeness of a throne... and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above." You have to read the whole of Ezekiel's prophecies in the light of that.

I do want to point this out to you, that right there in the revelation of that Man upon the throne one whole comprehensive order of things was being dismissed: Jerusalem, the temple, the whole Jewish system and the whole Jewish nation going away into captivity - passing out. Then, with that Man in full view, as you move to the end of the prophecies Ezekiel sees another Jerusalem, the frame of a city. He is carried away onto a high mountain and shown the frame of a city, and then shown the temple that never had been and never has yet been, and may never be on this earth. That is a very controversial point, but I am not one of those who believe that the whole Jewish system is going to be brought back again and Calvary undone. We will leave that. But there it is, a heavenly thing taking the place of the earthly, and this is all related to the Man in heaven. It corresponds to the letter to the Hebrews, and it corresponds to the book of the Revelation. When you get to the end of Revelation, you have the frame of a city seen from a very high mountain. That in passing.

The Man in the Glory God's Standard

My point is this, that it is the Man in heaven upon the throne who governs all this, because when that heavenly temple was brought into view, there is a man with a measuring rod who says to Ezekiel, 'Follow me, son of man, take note, lay to heart.' And this man took him in and through and round and up and down everywhere, measuring by the measure of a man, and it is a heavenly Man, the measure of heaven, for everything that is presented is undoubtedly a representation in figure of Jesus Christ. The Man on the throne in the glory is God's standard of everything, to which God is going to conform everything, by which God is governing everything. The measure of everything is the measure of that Man in the glory. Everything is determined as to how far it counts with God, how far God can put a number upon it and say, 'It counts'. And it counts with God by how much of Christ is there. That is the vision of God which resolves itself into the vision of the Man governing everything.

How comprehensive that Man is! How meticulously detailed that Man is from God's standpoint! How particular God is when the man comes down and says, "Son of man, mark well, lay to heart, take note!" You are almost wearied to death, your head almost hums as you go with that man trying to get the measurements of it all and seeing what it all means. Why all this? Why do you want the number of almost every inch? Why do you want to say exactly to a detail how much space there is here, or what this measures? Because it is not just something earthly, it is something *heavenly*, and everything that is heavenly related to the Lord Jesus is of very great significance. It signifies something. It is Christ that governs.

The Effect of Seeing the Man in the Glory

You come to the New Testament, and having seen the Man introduced and the Man perfected, you see the Man exalted and enthroned. Heaven is opened, and the Son of Man is seen standing at the right hand of God. He is there, standing to govern all that happens. It is that heavenly Man that Paul saw, and it was that vision which governed everything.

I said just now that it was not just that Saul of Tarsus, who had regarded Jesus of Nazareth as just a man, an earthly man, an impostor and a pretender, came to see at that time that He was the very glorified Son of God. That was revolutionary, that upheaved and overturned everything for Saul. But what I see as to that vision, which he called the heavenly vision, which comes out in practically all of his letters, especially his teaching letters (I mean as differing from his pastoral letters, but even there it is found), is that Paul saw that Man in the glory was not only the Son of God, but in some mighty, far-reaching way, that applied to him and had something to do with him; he had something to do with that, that it meant something so far as he was concerned and so far as the church was concerned. That is the real heart of the meaning of his phrase - "the church which is His Body" (Eph. 1:22-23). He is God, but He is Man in the glory and there is some link between that Man in the glory, and the church, believers, and himself, Paul. And it seems so clear that when he, in this letter to the Philippians (remembering it is not cut up into chapters and paragraphs, but is one continuous narrative), when he shows us that Man coming from the glory into humiliation, self-emptying, and passing to the cross in utter obedience to the will of His Father, and because of that being given the Name which is above every name: exalted, enthroned, to be the object of worship, to whom every knee in the celestial realm, in the terrestrial realm, and in the diabolical realm shall bow. (Note his language - "In the name of Jesus" (Phil. 2:10) - that is the name of the Man). When Paul has said that, he passes on into what in our arrangement is chapter 3, and he begins to tell us that there were many things which belonged to him as the earthly man which he accounted as being of tremendous value among men - his birth, his race, his position in the nation, but these are nothing, these are rubbish, this is all nonsense, "Veritable refuse because I have seen the Man in the glory" - "that I may gain Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

And then he begins to speak about attaining. He is not already complete, "I am not already perfect, I have not already attained, but leaving those things of the earthly man all behind, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14). In some way I am linked with that, I have seen the Man in the glory, it relates to me, it affects me, I have in some way to come there, to attain unto that - not to Deity, not to Godhead, but to the Man glorified". That is the heavenly vision. That is Paul's conception of Christ and the church His Body. You can read that in his other letters.

The Destiny of That Which is from Heaven

Now that brings us surely right to the point: the destiny of that which is from heaven, the heavenly Man, as personally in the case of the Son of Man, so corporately in the case of His Body, the church. The destiny... and the heart of it is not just a glorified humanity, it is the object of it being glorified. That Man there on the throne above in Ezekiel is there to govern everything, to govern the future course of things in relation to the man conception, the man idea, the man thought-intention of God. Everything that was to be governed by the man-principle, the man-standard, is now to be held to God's thought. This down here has failed. The Jerusalem of Ezekiel's time has failed. The nation, the Jews, of Ezekiel's time, have failed lamentably. The whole temple service has failed. God dismisses it; the glory disappears from it and now a heavenly vision of something that does answer to the Man in the glory is brought in in its place. It is a prophecy of what is to be: Christ in the glory is going to govern all the movements to God - not officially, but by reason of His manhood and what that manhood is.

That is the point that I want, if possible, to press upon you. Neither Christ, nor the church called into that great destiny of government for all the ages to come, neither Christ nor the church His body, is to fulfil that vocation officially. It will not be as on this earth. This world government can be put into the hands of almost anybody, qualified or not; very unqualified in many cases, in the place of government but having no right to be there so far as qualification is concerned, just official. This is not so in heaven, not so with God. Government is the government of *character*, not of office, not of people as people, but of manhood according to God's thought.

Spiritual Quality is Governmental in God's Sight

Why is God so particular? Why is the government for all ages to come bound up with so many cubits; it may be only three cubits, six cubits, eight cubits, twelve cubits (this is Ezekiel), bound up with small measures as well as large measures? It is spiritual quality that is governmental in God's sight. That is where the Jews failed over the Lord Jesus. They could not see how He could be king looking at Him from the standpoints of men. He is a nobody in this world, but He is God's destined Ruler because of what He essentially was and is in nature, in character, and we are called into the fellowship of God's Son. And it is made clear to us that the destiny of the church which is His body, of which we are members if we are in Christ by faith, is that spiritual government of God's universe which means to have and to hold everything according to God's mind.

God's Concern to Produce Spiritual Quality

That is why God is so particular with you and me. The further we go with the Lord, the longer we live and walk with the Lord, the more particular we find the Lord is with us about things. We do not get away with things later as we did earlier. The Lord was dealing with us earlier as with children, suffering much in the early years, but He is not doing that now. He is bringing us to measurement much more carefully and closely because it is that thing that is to rule in His universe for all the ages

to come. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12 AV), because we are, as He, "made perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10). This explains Philippians 3 and Paul's intense concern about things in the light of that heavenly vision. You do not think for a moment that all that concern and passion, agony and travail, is only to get saved. It is not a matter of salvation, not that he is wanting to get to heaven and is afraid he will not get there, but he has seen the significance of the Man in the glory. It is that he has seen that that Man in the glory represents God's idea for this universe in spiritual government. Now he writes his letters, and all his letters are with that in view. They are letters of strong, urgent exhortation and warning to Christians.

The Possibility of Missing the Purpose of Heavenly Birth

In Hebrews he presents the Man in the glory, "We behold Jesus, crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9). He relates that to Psalm 8, and he relates Psalm 8 to God's thought in the creation of man, "What is man...? Thou makest him to have dominion" (v.4-6), he failed. We see not all things under that man, but "we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour"; man in representation. He speaks of bringing many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10), and then some of the most terrible warnings that the Bible contains are in that letter to the Hebrews, and I do not believe that they relate to salvation, to the possibility of losing eternal life, but they are in relation to this very thing that Paul spoke about in his Philippian letter. And I believe that at least Paul had a very real hand in the writing of the Hebrew letter. He is saying the same thing in another way: you may miss the thing for which you were born from above; you may fail to come to that, you may fall short of that very destiny which is bound up with your having been born from above. Being born from above is not enough.

Oh, you will get to heaven all right if you are born from above, but Paul is concerned about something far more than that. All this warning and exhortation is in relation to the thing for which you are to go to heaven, for which you were born from above, and go back to the place of your birth. You are called, and in God's intention destined, to be a part of this great spiritual, governmental administration of the Body of Christ.

The Heavenly Man a Man of Abundant Resource

There are figures of this in the Old Testament. You can take Isaac if you like. You remember that Isaac is the embodiment of the principle of resurrection. In our previous meditation, we spoke of that chain with all its links, each one of which represented and embodied some particular aspect, feature, constituent, of the heavenly Man. Isaac embodies that Divine principle of resurrection. There are two things that come out in Isaac afterwards. We do not know a great deal about him after the great event on Mount Moriah, but there are two things. It says, "And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him" (Gen. 26:12). The man of resurrection is the man of abundant, God-given resource. If you stand on this side of the Cross, off the ground of the old man where disillusion, barrenness, failure, disappointment and all that sort of thing reigns under the curse, but on the resurrection side, begotten to a living hope, you are on the ground of spiritual abundance, you have wealth, riches, resources, for the people of God.

Look at the Lord Jesus, the antitype of Isaac: on resurrection ground, off the ground of the old man, He is a Man of wonderful resources always. We pointed out earlier that He was constantly bringing His disciples to the point where they were at the end of their resources, and they had, so to speak, to say, "Well, we can do nothing about it!" So it was with the multitude and the feeding of them; so it was on the lake in the storm. They are at their wits' end, they are at the end of their resources; even as experienced and hardened sailors and fishermen, they are at the end of their resources. The Lord is constantly bringing them to the end of their resources, the resources of the earthly man, in order to

show that the heavenly Man had resources altogether beyond their knowledge. He could meet the situation quite simply. They did not know where He got it from. They had to say, "Thou art the Son of God" (Matt. 14:33). This is Man, this is God. The man who lives as Christ did, on the ground of the heavenly Man, is going to be the man to whom God gives resources for others. This is the meaning of Isaac with his hundredfold in the first year.

A Ministry Throughout the Ages of the Ages

What is God trying to do with us? Why is He taking us this way? It is in order to make us people who have something to give, to minister, out of His fulness. And not only in this life. It would be a poor lookout if the measure in which we are able to give in this life, or even to receive, were the end of it all. You may not be very much troubled about the matter of giving. I confess to you, without any boasting, that it is a real problem with me. My trouble is, how can I get to the people of God all that the Lord has given? I see so much, but no opportunity to give, no scope for giving. If that is the end, what a mockery life is! I will be giving a long time after I have left this world. I am only illustrating, I am not talking about myself. When I was in Los Angeles, after one of the meetings a woman who was a strong advocate of Theosophy went up to someone else in the meeting, and said, "You don't tell me that that man got all that in one life!" - arguing that I must have had many incarnations before! I am not directing attention to anything I have, but if it only stays with one life, it is a poor lookout. God is seeking to fill us unto a scope and an opportunity and a need far beyond, not this earthly life and the next incarnation - but unto the ages of the ages. That is the function of His body - wealth.

And then that other thing about Isaac, the digging of the wells which the Philistines had filled up, the re-digging of the wells; the removal of the stuff that the Philistines, the natural man, had put into the wells to block them up. Isaac spent his life opening up those wells for others, and the herdsmen came and quarrelled about them. But Isaac said, "Alright, quarrel if you like! I have no personal interest in this, I am not doing something for myself, you can take the old wells if you like; I am going on digging." It is the resurrection man who is engaged in securing supplies of Life. The figure changes at the end of the book of the Revelation - the river of the water of Life and the tree of Life and then the leaves of the tree for the health of the nations, the water producing that which is for the health of the nations. If the city is the church figuratively speaking, there is something extra to the city which needs looking after. It does not mean there is imminent sin and disease. That is why the word is health, not healing; health, maintaining a state of life, maintaining a state of glory. It is to be ministered to. Nothing will be in stagnation. Perfection does not mean stagnation. "Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:7). I do not know how it is going to be done, but there it is. Life, Life spreading, increasing; ever-growing fulness.

But it is to be ministered through that which is called the city. In other words, it is the church, and you and I have got to learn here by exercise how to get the resources, the water, for ministry. Our real ministry is yet to come. We may deplore the smallness of our ministry here, but God is seeking to do in us that which will make possible a ministry throughout the ages that are to come - a great ministry, where and when "His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face". That is the vision of the Man, Himself becoming corporate in His members, to be in glory ministering and administering. Paul says: "unto the ages of the ages"; "that in the ages to come He might show (by the church) the exceeding riches of His grace" (Eph. 2:7).

Christ God's Final Standard

You see, the beginning, "Ye must be born from above" (John 3:3), has tremendous potentialities,

immense possibilities and far-reaching destiny. That which is born from above is seen at last to be above in governmental function and fulfilment. But remember it all comes back to this: just how far we will let the Spirit of God build Christ into us, build us into Christ, and conform us to His image, deal with us in the light of that Man, make changes, put us through discipline, chastening, and conforming fires. It depends on how much we will let Him do that.

We must remember that what I am here for on this earth, in God's mind, as a Christian, is that Christ should be here and should abound. However much I do, if it does not mean an increase of Christ, however much I may say and profess, however much truth I may know and hold, if my presence does not mean the presence of the Lord Jesus, and that in an increasing and growing way, I have missed the point, I have missed the way, I have missed the meaning. When it is all finished, the measure of the Man in the glory will be put against us, and all will be determined by how far up the measure of Christ we have come. That is heaven's verdict upon a life. Christ is the verdict, Christ is the standard. Oh, then let us give ourselves, not to intensive self-occupation and self-cultivation and all that kind of introspective stuff, but let us give ourselves constantly before God that we shall be found growing in the measure of Christ, that it may be true as heaven and earth and hell look on, that they are discerning and seeing Christ, feeling Christ, and having to say, "He is here, Christ is here!" Will you make that your quest with me?