

NOTES OF MINISTRY

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THE LORD'S PRECIOUSNESS TO THE FATHER

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**Quotations from the Holy Scriptures in this publication are usually taken
from the Darby Translation**

THE LORD'S PRECIOUSNESS TO THE FATHER

Luke 2:8-14; Mark 1:9-11; Matthew 17:1-5;
Luke 23:44-46; John 20:17; Acts 1:9-11

It is in mind to speak of what the writer of the hymn we sang encapsulates so sweetly in the last verse:

'In Thy grace Thou now hast brought us
Sharers of Thy joy to be,
And to know the blessed secret
Of His preciousness to Thee.' Hymn 277

What is in mind is to take these passages referring to six points in the Lord's life here, and to go over them and the periods between them, and to direct our hearts and minds to the preciousness of Christ to the Father. It says, "Because it is contained in the scripture: Behold, I lay in Zion a corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be put to shame", 1 Pet.2:6. I have in mind to refer to these and other scriptures to illustrate what is in mind.

In Luke 2 we have this interesting expression as to "a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men". It is the incoming of the Lord in His birth. We know that He was distinctive even before that, because it says of Him, "the holy thing also which shall be born", Luke 1:35. Now that One is presented as a Babe in Bethlehem's manger, and the Father is sending this message, "good pleasure in men". Here was the One in whom His good pleasure would be found; He would find His delight in Him: as we go on we will see that. The Scriptures describe that progress from the manger to the Jordan, from the Jordan to the mount, from the

mount to the cross and His death and burial, and from the tomb to His resurrection and ascension and His coming again; that is what I had in mind to speak of.

Here we have God's "good pleasure in men". God would find His pleasure in this One, seen here as a Babe. We have spoken of the lamb character; and here is a Babe, helpless, unable to defend itself. It says in the Psalms, "thou didst make me trust, upon my mother's breasts", Ps.22:9. The Lord is seen here as a Babe, and the Father was able to identify – although the Child had done nothing as yet – that in Him His good pleasure would be in men. God would find His delight in this beloved One, and because of that He would find His delight in men. It is wonderful to lay hold of. I feel the need to lay hold of it more.

In Mark's gospel, we have the matter of the Lord's baptism. I wanted to speak first about the period of time between His birth and His baptism – the manger to the Jordan – and what characterised that part of the Lord's life that the Father delighted in. We have that glimpse of the Lord at the age of twelve "occupied in my Father's business", Luke 2:49. You could write that as a banner over that private, secret history with God and man, of the Lord Jesus here – "occupied in my Father's business". As a boy of twelve He was everything that the Father sought to find in a boy of twelve. Scripture says: "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed", Isa.50:4. How delightful to the Father, that here was One who was always ready, who always had a ready ear for what the Father would say, whatever it might be. Later in Luke 2, it says that the Lord Jesus "advanced ... in favour with God and men" (v.52). It also says in the prophet, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and

as a root out of dry ground”, Isa.53:2. Oh, what a joy to the Father to see that; Jesus was not drawing anything from this scene, but drawing everything from the Father as a root out of dry ground.

That marked this period from His birth to His baptism, the Lord’s growing up before the Father, “a root out of dry ground”. It culminates in what is said at His baptism: “*Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight”. It has been said that here, His personal perfections were a place of rest for the divine glory¹ – the Father saying that He found His delight in Him, and the Spirit descended as a dove: “the Spirit, as a dove, descending upon him”. The Spirit found all in order, nothing to adjust, everything in perfection. It is the thought of rest, the dove speaks of what is peaceful; the Spirit complacent in all He found in that One. The Father’s voice came from heaven, “*Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight”. It is the culmination of these thirty years of the secret history of the Lord’s life, in secret with the Father, and in secret with those He knew. We do not get many glimpses of it, but we see that the Father found His delight in Him – as the hymn says, ‘the blessed secret of His preciousness to thee’. How wonderful it was that the Father had that in Christ, and heaven cannot be silent. In this passage, the Lord is about to begin His public pathway, of service, and we have heaven’s approbation. It is really the mark of heaven’s approval of that thirty years of life when He was “occupied in my Father’s business”.

In Matthew, we have the mount where the Lord was transfigured before them. I thought of what characterised the Lord’s life from the Jordan to the

¹ CAC Vol.27 p.325

mount – a period of about three years. What a period it was: it says of Him, “who went through all quarters doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil”, Acts 10:38. The Lord says in Nazareth, where He was brought up, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”, Luke 4:18. Why? It says, “to preach glad tidings”. Think of the Father’s delight in every step of the Lord’s pathway. “My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work”, John 4:34. In the Lord’s pathway here, every step was according to the Father’s will; what gems, you might say, these elements of His life in service. John says, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself would contain the books written”, John 21:25. Heaven contains them; heaven has it all recorded, every blessed feature so precious to the Father. The world could not contain these books, but *these* things were written – so we have *them*, they are contained in the Scripture. We see in them the secret of His preciousness to the Father.

In that period of service, the Lord spoke to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, about new birth, a very basic thing; and He spoke to a Samaritan woman about worship: what a blessed matter it was. The Father’s will was done in all of this; the Lord did and said what the Father had in mind for that day and for that person. In everything, the Lord was doing the Father’s will: the healing, the selecting of the disciples. Think of Him in prayer before the Father as to selecting the disciples, knowing all that was involved in that selection; all shared, you might say, with the Father, the Father’s mind coming into it all. How precious it was to the Father: the Lord never did anything of His own volition, exactly; He was always

waiting for the Father's word: "He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed". What a blessed thing it is to contemplate, that the Father had here One who, in every step, did what He willed, and loved to do it; He loved to do the Father's will. There is a beautiful correspondence between the Father's love for Christ, and Christ's love for the Father: the Father finding His delight in that blessed One.

On the mount, the Father's voice is heard again. Peter, when he refers to this (see 2 Peter 1:17,18), speaks of the Lord and the voice; he does not refer to the diversion that he, Peter, brought in here. The Father says, "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him". It was not a passing thing, it applied to these three years of service. Those years of public service were a different test to the first thirty years of the Lord's life, and now another test was coming. In Luke's account of the mount, it says that they "spoke of his departure which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem", Luke 9:31. That brings us to our next scripture in Luke 23, to the cross. I thought about that period of time, perhaps about six months of service, from His coming down from the mountain until the crucifixion. From the mount His face was set to go to Jerusalem, to the cross (Luke 9:51). The clouds were gathering; the storm that the enemy was bringing in to rage against the Lord's Christ was building. He comes to a village of the Samaritans and they reject Him because His face was set steadfastly to go to Jerusalem (vv.52-55). His pathway brings about rejection; and His disciples want fire to come down. They thought it was deserved, but no, it is not the spirit of the lowly Jesus, it is not His Father's will. He is going on, He is accepting that will, accepting the sufferings, treading that pathway to Calvary; how

blessed it is to contemplate that. He was not defending Himself, the same Jesus who healed the lepers (chap.17:11-19), such wonderful things, is going on. He meets the blind man at Jericho who cries out for mercy (chap.18:35-43). Does he find mercy? Yes, of course! It is the same Jesus; you find Him weeping over Jerusalem, the Father's feelings expressed: "If thou hadst known, even thou, even at least in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes" (chap.19:42). Think of the feelings of the Father and the feelings of the Lord combining there: He wept over Jerusalem. Then He weeps over the grave of Lazarus (John 11:35), as we touched on in the reading. It was the common lot of humanity, yet how He felt for that family; and He comes in and He raises Lazarus.

Just days afterwards – we do not know how long but it is not long, it would seem – the Lord is facing His own death. There is that woman who pours out the alabaster flask; she poured it out on Him because heaven delighted to prompt that in her heart, that the Lord should be anointed in this way. The Lord says, "Suffer her to have kept this for the day of my preparation for burial", John 12:7. How blessed it was. His steps go on: He desires that He might have that supper with His disciples. How blessed are the things that are opened up there. We see in the gospels, particularly in John, how the Lord brings in these blessed matters – "I do always the things that are pleasing to him", to the Father (John 8:29). He says, "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again", John 10:17. How wonderful! I remember reading a little remark that 'every movement that He made gave

the Father fresh occasion to love Him'.² You can see where that impression comes from. Everything is according to the Father's will: "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again". He is moving on: it has been said that He is moving on to the altar, not to the throne³; He is moving on and the storm is gathering, every step is precious. He kneels before the Father in the garden – "if it be possible let this cup pass from me", Matt.26:39. I think the three-fold repetition of His prayer is important; not because there was any doubt, but to establish beyond all doubt that the blessings God had in mind for us could only be accomplished by this blessed One going the way of death. He receives that cup from the Father.

Where we read in Luke, it says, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit". Then, "And having said this, he expired". I thought this was particularly affecting because in the previous column of the scripture, we have the words "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (v.34). The hymn-writer says,

'What grace was in the suff'ring Lamb,
Who died to make us free.' Hymn 215

What grace was there – the Father's feelings in relation to His people, in relation to mankind, perfectly reflected in everything that the Lord did. In every circumstance, He was found perfect. We see, as these scriptures are before us, something of the secret of His preciousness to the Father.

He lays down His life, He goes down into death. Scripture puts together the cross and His

² JT N.S. Vol 50 p.344

³ J G Bellett, The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, p.20

death and burial. It says “For I delivered to you, in the first place, what also I had received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures”, 1 Cor.15:3,4. I just thought it was remarkable that He died, He laid down His life, “according to the scriptures”, and it involved the shedding of His blood. John brings that in: “but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water”, John 19:34. How necessary these two things are, the blood and the water. It is not in my mind to go into that now, but I wanted to draw attention to the feelings of the Father. The Lord had just committed His spirit into the hands of the Father, but His body was going down into death. He had died, and He would be taken down from the cross, but that soldier, to make sure that the Lord really was dead, pierced His side.

Think of the Father’s feelings. It has been said that He was never more precious to the Father than when He had to endure the forsaking, and then going down into death⁴. The Father found His delight, not exactly in the fact that His suffering and death were necessary, but in the fact that here was One prepared to go through with it all in perfect submission to His will. God had counted the cost. Scripture speaks of counting the cost (see Luke 14:28); we could say reverently that God had done that; and here was the One who in God’s ways in moral excellence was carrying it out. He was giving effect to the counsels of God, going down into death and into the grave.

That scripture in 1 Corinthians goes on, “and that he was buried”. That is a lovely distinction, that

⁴ Edward Dennett, ‘Foundational Ministry’ 2019 Edition, p.217.

“he was buried”, and it is left at that. It *is* according to the Scriptures, of course. We see that in the scripture – “And men appointed his grave with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death”, Isa.53:9. He has gone that way: “he was buried”. We can say that the work which was accomplished between the cross and His resurrection involved His death, the shedding of His blood, and His burial. What meaning it has for us! But He cannot remain there. The psalmist says, “For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol, neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption”, Ps.16:10. That is what the psalmist says: He could not be left there. He was in the grave three days and three nights; it was a perfect witness: no shorter and no longer than was needed to witness to divine love; “thus shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights”, Matt.12:40. What a matter it was for the Father, that the One whom He loved, in whom He found His delight, was found there in the grave, in death.

But He could not be held by it, He could not be left there. That is demonstrated where we read in John – I thought it was good to bring in the four gospels, and it is important how John presents it. The Lord says, “I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”. He could not be left there. I thought of what the apostle Paul says to the Ephesians, “what the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead, and he set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies”, Eph.1:19,20. The Lord could not be held by the power of death. You could say that He had the authority to take His life again:

He says that (see John 10:18). He had authority to come to life again, but in the blessed dependence that marked Him, it is the Father who raises Him: “he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead”. It was not simply a word; it was not like creation when “*he* spoke, and it was done; *he* commanded, and it stood fast”, Ps.33:9. It was power: “according to the working of the might of his strength in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead”. He is risen: the One whom the Father loves, and now the Lord is introducing His own to this wonderful relationship. How the Father’s heart, in His delight in Christ, is extended. That love continues; the Lord is now out of death, He is risen. The angel says: “He is not here, for he is risen”, Matt.28:6. And then the Lord appears to His own. First He sends this word, “go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”. He brings His own into that relationship with the Father, into the Father’s delight in Him, that blessed One.

In Acts we read that He was taken up: “And having said these things he was taken up, they beholding him, and a cloud received him out of their sight”. I was thinking of these forty days: it says earlier in the chapter: “he presented himself living, after he had suffered, with many proofs; being seen by them during forty days, and speaking of the things which concern the kingdom of God” (v.3). What was involved in that! The Lord in resurrection comes to His own. Luke speaks about that: “The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon”, Luke 24:34. He had secured Simon; the Lord had prayed for him before, that his faith would not fail (chap.22:32); Simon Peter was going to be necessary for the spread of the testimony. It was all in the Father’s

mind, all part of the delight of the Father that He found in Christ as He worked in resurrection amongst His own. The Lord reached Simon, and then He secures those two on the way to Emmaüs (Luke 24:13-35). They were going away and He brings them back: their souls were exercised to come back to the place where the Lord is being spoken about and to which He was coming (v.36), for He comes in amongst His own. It also refers to “all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us” (Acts 1:21) and about the different times that He appeared to them in these forty days (see 1 Corinthians 15:5-8). He was encouraging them, building them up so that there might be that which was established and would continue here after He had gone.

The Lord was acting so that all the work of salvation that He had wrought would bear fruit, fruit to God and fruit to Himself. Then we have this: “having said these things he was taken up”. He does not go of His own volition exactly, but He was taken up; the Father saw to it that He was taken up into heaven. We should lay hold of this; that the One in whom the Father delighted, the One who had been so faithful to Him – the Father saw to it that He was taken up in front of His own, “and a cloud received him out of their sight”. It is wonderful language: it shows the delight of the Father in bringing that blessed One to be with Himself. It says, “whom heaven indeed must receive”, Acts 3:21. How could it be otherwise? The One who delighted the Father’s heart is now in heaven at the Father’s right hand, sitting on the throne, awaiting the word to come again.

That is why I read on; I thought it was interesting to see what these two men say: “why do ye stand looking into heaven?”. They were standing

there looking into heaven, but they had seen Him taken up. These two men say “This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven”, so the disciples saw Him: “And as they were gazing into heaven, as he was going” – they saw the Lord taken into heaven. The mind goes to Elijah and Elisha. Elisha wanted a double portion of Elijah’s spirit (2 Kings 2:9) and Elijah says, “if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so to thee” (v.10). They saw Jesus taken up, and the two men say, “This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld him going into heaven”. He is coming again in like manner. The Lord is coming again; He is going to reign, and He will be publicly vindicated. The Father’s delight in Him will be acknowledged by all when He comes to reign, taking the place that is rightly His. In the meantime, we wait for Him to come for all of His own. It speaks of “a king who made a wedding feast for his son”, Matt.22:2. There is going to be a wedding feast for this One, and all those who have been secured by Him will be there, those who form the bride, that which delights His heart and also delights the Father’s heart. Christ will have that which answers to His own heart. We might just finish on that, that the Father’s delight is in Jesus, and those whom He has secured.

Well, may we be encouraged as we think of this, may it lift our hearts and focus them on this blessed One in whom the Father found His delight, for the Lord’s name’s sake.

Address at Glasgow
25 April 2026

Robert McClean

THE ONE WHO DESCENDED AND ASCENDED

Ephesians 4:8-10

The apostle does not name the Person he is writing about – he does not need to; there is only one Man that this passage could refer to. “He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things”: Jesus is the only One that this could apply to. How wonderful that we can speak of a Saviour who is glorified at God’s right hand:

‘On His Father’s throne is seated

Christ the Lord, the Living One’ Hymn 404

There He is, in His glory, ascended. I would like to speak about descending and ascending in relation to the Lord Jesus. It is a wonderful fact that the theme of the gospel is a Man who has descended, but also who has ascended, and is now at the right hand of God. God is satisfied and delighted with the Man at His right hand now. That is the place from which the gospel is coming to you today.

The gospel is coming from the glory, from the Man at God’s right hand, who has satisfied God completely in relation to the work He has done. Do you know Him as your Saviour and Lord? Do you know the One who is there at the right hand of God? He has taken that place for you. That place of exaltation depends on the fact that He first descended. What a contrast to man: men begin on the earth and try to get off the earth, sometimes literally, or in self-promotion or whatever. That is their bent of mind. Who do they get that from? They get that mind from Satan. Satan said, “I will ascend into the heavens”, Isa.14:13. Satan challenged God; he said, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I

will be like the Most High” (v.14). But he fell: he did not descend; he fell because it was beyond him; it was an act of wilfulness and sin that God could not allow.

Then when God brought in His creation, Satan tried again. When he spoke to Eve, he said, “... in the day ye eat of it ... ye will be as God, knowing good and evil”, Gen.3:5. He said, as it were, ‘Ascend! You take up this line of ascending that I have been on’. It was a disaster then, as at every other time when a person tries to ascend. We speak of it as the fall, the incoming of sin, the fall of man. God made His creation in its perfection, and it was spoiled because someone desired to follow Satan in ascending, setting aside God’s instruction.

How wonderful that there is a Man who had in mind to descend. The passage in Ephesians properly refers to the Lord Jesus in His Manhood, but we must remember who this Person is. He subsisted in the form of God. It is wonderful that there is a Person, the Person we know as Jesus, who subsisted in the form of God. Eternally, in eternity past, He was there, outside the scope of time as we know it; He was there, existing in glory. But that One was prepared to take another position, another place, according to the divine mind, and it entailed that He descended; it entailed a different kind of mind. This glorious Man had a mind to descend. His was a completely different mind from my mind, or your mind, or any of us. We have ambitions and high thoughts; we would make much of ourselves, try to make us appear better in other people’s view. But this One had a different mind, a mind to come down, a mind to descend. How beautiful it is to see that. The scripture says, “For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;

who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God", Phil.2:5,6. That is, it was true that He was equal with God. That is how I understand that reference, that when He said He was equal with God, it was true: He was not stealing that position, He was not claiming something that was not His; it was really His to be God. And yet, subsisting in the form of God, He "emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross" (vv.7,8). His pathway was entirely different from that of other men – from yours, from mine, from that of everyone else. How wonderful that there is a Man who had that mind to descend.

Why did He have to descend? Because of the whole issue of sin, and of man's waywardness from God; and so that God should have an answer and be able to secure persons, according to a different line and a different way. Not Satan's way of ascending in his own assumed right and power, but descending so that men should be reached by the grace of God that has come down to them, come down to us where we are. That grace has come down lower than men were. The Samaritan came up to the wounded man (see Luke 10:25-37), a man who was wounded and half-dead. The Samaritan had been lower; the Lord took a lower place than you have taken. Do you know that the Lord has taken a place that is lower than you? He did that so that you could be raised up, elevated, brought into the place God has in mind.

What does that mean? Where we read in Ephesians, it says, "But that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the

earth?”. The Lord Jesus has been buried. He has been in the grave; the Lord of glory, God in His own Person, has come into manhood and taken a bondman’s form, and He lay in a grave, three days and three nights “in the heart of the earth”, Matt.12: 40. Why was He in the grave? He took the place for you, the place that you deserve. He took the place that you and I deserve on the cross, and He took the place that you and I deserve in death, and He took the place that you and I deserve in the grave. We deserve to be placed out of God’s sight, because of what we are as sinners, and the Lord Jesus has taken these places so we can come into blessing. Every step of His blessed humiliation, as it has been called, was taking Him to death. It was the mind to go down. He never sought to rise up where it was God’s mind that He should go down. He took the place of weakness, of humiliation, a place that was contrary to everything that man according to flesh would desire. He took “a bondman’s form”; He was ready to serve. It is beautiful to see Him bowing at the feet of His disciples to wash their feet (see John 13:3-12). Where there was something that needed Him to go down, He would do it.

It is beautiful to see the pathway of the Lord Jesus, all leading to this time when, He “having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross”. That was a bondman’s death: the Romans, who crucified Him, thought that was suitable for a slave. I have my responsibility in that, in what men did to the Lord. The superscription was written above the cross in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (John 19:20), covering the whole of the known earth at the time; all were engaged in that activity of dealing unrighteously with the Lord of glory. Yet think of what God has

done. God has said, as it were, 'If you deal so despitely, so terribly, with my Son, I will use that as the means of bringing in blessing to you. If you put Him on a cross of shame, then on that cross of shame He will suffer in your place that you should come into blessing. If you give Him everything that is contrary, I will use it to bless you.' And that is God's mind towards you; that is His heart towards you.

If you have not yet trusted in Him, it means that you have taken your place along with a world that chose Barabbas and not Jesus (see Matt.27:20-23). We have been in that place: every one of us has been in that place at some time if we were not accepting Jesus. He says, 'If you have taken that place, I will take up your issues; I will take that matter on. I will take on your sins; you only need to trust in Me, and repent and have faith in Me, and you will find that every one of your sins was taken and born on that cross'. The judgment of God was executed at the cross, and Jesus bore that judgment for me. The judgment of God in its fulness – three hours of forsaking on the cross – was borne for me. The grace of God has come out in Jesus to me, a sinner who needs a Saviour, and He has borne the judgment for me. I trust that every one here is assured of the glory of the Saviour. Be assured that He has gone to the depths for you. And further, there was that penalty upon you and me as sinners, the penalty of death. He did not avoid death; it was the depths to which He went for you. He went into death for you; He died, Christ died for all. He descended into the depths.

There on the cross something further took place. Even in battle, persons respect the body of a dead man. There is something despicable about harming the body of someone who is dead. But that

is what they did to my Saviour. A soldier took a spear and pierced His side, desecrating a dead body. What does God do with men who do the most despicable thing they can to His Son? The blood of Jesus Christ was poured out, the blood and the water poured from that side, so that every one of your sins can be washed away. What a Saviour you can have, what a Master, what a Lord! What a depth He has been prepared to go into for you. Wicked hands put Him on that cross, but God ensured that loving hands took Him down from the cross. Persons who loved Him took Him down, and they cared for Him. Your Saviour took a place in which, to put it simply, He could not care for His own body. It was in a sense as any other dead body; the reality of death had come in; and God provided for Him. But He had to be buried, because, as it says in the scripture we read, He had to be in the lowest place: "he also descended into the lower parts of the earth" – lower than you have been, just for you, and because of His love for you. It was not just for a moment, but three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Why? Because of you, because of me – sinners who are worthy only to be removed, cleared away from God's sight. Jesus took that place; He went to the grave, He was covered, the great stone was rolled over; He was there in the heart of the earth. Why? For me, because that was necessary for my salvation and yours – a Saviour who would go to the lowest depths.

"He that descended": what a description of Jesus! No one else fits the description. And if He has gone that way, God is not going to let the Saviour remain in the grave. He is going to vindicate that Man; indeed, He is going to vindicate Him publicly in His time. But for the moment, God has said, 'I am going to show how great my approval of Jesus is';

and He has ensured that His lovers will know where He is, and will be in the secret of the way He has gone. It says, "He that descended is the same who has also ascended". He came out from the grave, He was raised from the dead, He stood on the earth again, He was here for forty days and forty nights: that is part of His ascending movement. There is that reference in the poem,

‘Angel lips proclaim Him risen ...
By the glory of the Father, and His own
inherent right’⁵

The glory of the Father raised Him; the Father's approval was so great that at the earliest moment when it could be said that He was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, the Father was there. Mary was early at the tomb (John 20:1), but the Father was earlier. The reference to 'His own inherent right' reminds us that death could not hold this One. As He went into death, He burst its power. The power of death met Someone who was greater than it, who entered death having laid down His life of His own volition, and therefore by the power that is in Him, He rose again from the grave.

He walked among men: how beautiful to see the Saviour in resurrection. They said, "The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon", Luke 24:34. You could say of Peter that he had just denied the Lord. Yet on the first resurrection day, He came to Peter, and they say, He "has appeared to Simon". The bond is not broken; the Lord resolves what Peter had done in denying Him; that sin is washed away in the precious blood of Jesus. That is

⁵ Mrs C A Markham: 'Transcending Love', A Selection of Poems
ed. G H S Price p.79

the beginning, and every day since then there has been that work of Jesus, to console, to help, to come near people. Then, after these forty days, He went out to Bethany, where so much blessing had come in, and from there He ascended. In our passage it says, "He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens". He had the right to ascend, He had the absolute right and power to ascend, and to remain in that glorified position.

It also says that He "was carried up into heaven", Luke 24:51. That is, He was carried up into heaven in the fulness of the Father's approval of Him and delight in Him. He went up through all the heavens, that He might fill all things. Every intelligent creature that there was in the heavens must acclaim Him as He went through. He "has been received up in glory" (1 Tim.3:16), and there He is still at the Father's right hand. The Father has given Him that place. He says, "as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne", Rev.3:21. He is on the Father's throne, in the place of greatness and glory. He remains the same: He has the same mind; His spirit is the same; He has the same care for you. He is interested in you, and now He is at the Father's right hand. If you give someone elevation and power in this world, they want to accrue all their interests to themselves, and to be established in the glory they have been given. But there He is on the Father's throne, and He is interceding for you. If you are a believer, He is acting there to represent you before the Father. A believer has One there who is the great high Priest before the Father. He is also your "patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous", 1 John 2:1. That One who has been given that place of glory is occupied with you, dear believer; He is there for you who have trusted in Him. And if

you have not trusted in Him, He is there for you, the sinner, as a Saviour. He is there for you as a believer, to sanctify you, to look after your interests in heaven. Scripture says we are to have our minds on the things above (Col.3:2); they are your things – they belong to you up in heaven. Your name is written there. Have you thought of the fact that God has taken the time to write your name down in heaven as one who has trusted in the Saviour?

And further in His care for you and His interest in you, having come into glory, Jesus has sent another divine Person here. Himself a divine Person, from that ascended Man the Holy Spirit has come. He descended on Jesus when He was here, in the form of a dove, to show His approval (Matt.3:16). But then the Holy Spirit of God has come down so He can dwell in you and help you, guide you, and guard you. He gives you that link with the risen and glorified Man, so that you know that you are associated with the heavenly Man. How wonderful the Holy Spirit is. He is here as having come down. The Lord Jesus too came down. It shows the heart and the mind of God towards you.

This same One will come down again, close to the earth; He will come to the clouds (1 Thess.4:17). It is wonderful that He will come so near that those who have trusted in Him will hear His voice. And we will see His face, and be like Him, and be with Him through all eternity. You will ascend with Him to the place where you belong, because He has secured that place for you. He says in John 14, “for I go to prepare you a place” (v.2). How did He do that? He did that by taking up that place before God for you. Then He says, “and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to

myself, that where I am ye also may be" (v.3). He who descended has ascended up to the highest place and will bring you into the elevated position He has prepared. He, as God in His Person, must have the distinctive place, and the Scripture speaks of that when it says that He has "also ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things". We will be brought into the highest place in the created sphere and will be with Him eternally.

He will also descend again, after He has caught up the church, to assert God's rights on the earth, and to be publicly vindicated where He was despised. The last men saw of Him was when they rolled the stone over the door of the tomb (Matt.27:60); but they will see Him again. There will be those who trust in Him, and how wonderful it will be to enjoy a thousand years of perfect rule and administration on this earth. The more you look at the earth and all that surrounds it, the more you look forward to a perfect administration under the Lord of glory who will claim and be given this place, and will rule in equity, in peace and perfection. The world will flourish as it ought; corn will grow on the tops of the mountains when the Prince of Peace is in control (Ps.72:16).

Believers on the Lord Jesus will have been received up into glory before then, and they will be an influence over this earth. Scripture speaks about that great vessel, the assembly, descending from heaven (Rev.21:9-14). I do not think it is going to descend to the earth, but it will be displayed, descending from heaven, and the world will see the excellence of what God has in His assembly. It will influence the whole scene; it will be part of that blessed administration that God will establish in Christ.

In the meantime, what is your position in relation to this Man who has done so much for you? Have you trusted in Him? Have you believed in Him? Are you faithful to Him? Are you marked by the same spirit, and place and attitude, that marked Him? "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus": the mind to go down, the mind to descend, the mind to serve like He did: that is what He looks for. In the meantime, know that believers in Him are the most elevated persons on the earth, and yet walking in lowliness of serving and blessing. I remember a brother who used to speak about the brethren as 'heaven's aristocracy in disguise'. That is your position. Are you providing blessing, serving in the way that is in the divine mind? You can be washing the feet of the saints, doing whatever is in the divine thought for you. That is what you have received by trusting in Him, but as you trust in Him, He is looking for you to take after Himself, to be like Him.

May the Lord bless the word, for His name's sake.

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