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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

76/F

Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer", Clapham on
Wednesday 21.1.76

Hymns 76, 26, 228

Reading: Acts 1 (1-14) Text Acts 1.10 & 11

"And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up,
behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said,
"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same
Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in
like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven".

These verses record one of the most remarkable events that
have occurred upon this earth. In the fulness of the time the
Redeemer came into this world for a particular purpose - the
redemption of all His people that were given to Him by His Father
and who were eternally loved by Him and on whose behalf He
completed the great work of redemption. Beloved friends, to have a
place and an interest in the substitution of our glorious and
blessed Redeemer is the greatest blessing that we can have and has
the most far-reaching issues in regard to our everlasting destiny.
If we possessed the whole world it could not bring us the happiness
that a revealed Saviour brings into the heart of a poor waiting
soul who feels the burden of his guilt and his personal need and
gets a view of Him as the chiefest among ten thousand and the
altogether lovely.

In the New Testament we have a very clear record of these
important events of His incarnation. "When the fulness of the time
was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the
law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive
the adoption of sons":- that they might receive eternal redemption.
The great work of redemption centres in this glorious and eternal
Person Who is from everlasting, the eternal Son of God. There was
never a time when He was not. There was a time when He was not
incarnate, but there was never a time when He was not the eternal
Son of God in the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity. They were

favoured disciples were they not to behold this remarkable ascension of the great Redeemer? They were very favoured disciples, for we read that "when He had spoken these things" relating to the Holy Ghost that should come upon them and with Whom they should be witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ, "when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up". This is made abundantly clear in the Holy Scriptures and is a vital point, that the same body, the sacred body of our blessed Redeemer, is in heaven; and there He is seen by those on whose behalf He suffered as their blessed and glorious Redeemer. He saved them by His death and the shedding of His own most precious blood. "He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight". They were favoured people to behold this; it was a point in their subsequent ministry. "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven". This must point to the Saviour's second coming, of which we read that He will come the second time without sin, or rather, that is, not to atone for sin; He will come the second time without sin unto salvation. It is a wonderful mercy this, beloved friends, to have an interest in the Gospel.

The point here that has been attractive to me is just this sentence, "This same Jesus", to which I would apply myself in particular. When we ponder over the great work of redemption and its ultimate far-reaching consequences we are quite at a point that the work of redemption was accomplished by this same Jesus. It was this same Jesus Who was a Person in the glorious Trinity from everlasting; but in particular the name Jesus, as you know, means Saviour, "For He shall save His people from their sins". It is confirming to contemplate that the great work of redemption centres in this aspect in this same Jesus. In the fulness of the time God sent forth His Son, "this same Jesus", and He was born at Bethlehem, and we are acquainted with the particulars and circumstances that attended His extraordinary birth. It was this same Jesus Who came into this

poor, dying world to redeem His people; Who took upon Him the burden of guilt of which His people were guilty; Who bore their sins away in His own body on the tree; and to the satisfaction of justice He paid the ransom price that was charged upon Him, stood in the place of the guilty and suffered what was due to us, if we have an interest in this same Jesus. There is indeed something profoundly blessed and glorious as we contemplate the work of redemption now in that sense accomplished. A multitude whom no man can number are delivered and redeemed from the curse of a broken law on whose behalf He said, "It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." O dear friends what a mercy to have a knowledge of Him. It is a mercy to be seeking after Him. It is a mercy to be brought to that place of which the hymnwriter speaks, "Give me Christ or else I die". We shall certainly die eternally unless He is given to us, that is to say, unless we are among that number that the Father gave to His beloved Son and on whose behalf He suffered and died. I have often said we need to keep close to Calvary for that is the way to heaven, through the merit and blood of a once-crucified Christ. "This same Jesus" can come into our lives, our difficulties, our exercises and our burdens, our conflict, our hope and our trust. Some it may be would say, What I long to feel is the virtue of that cleansing blood on my conscience to purge my sins away. It must be by this same Jesus who loved His people and gave Himself for them. This, on reflection, renders sin to be a terrible reality, a dreadful thing, because it is against God and His law. Nothing really is more terrible than sin because of the consequences of it. If we die in our sins we shall sink into the bottomless pit; but if we have an interest in this same Jesus nothing can be so blessed in our own soul's experience, in our trials, burdens, losses and changes, and all that attends us in this mortal state.

If you are low then, and feel as though you are sinking and that you will never come through, will never endure unto the end, you need the help of "this same Jesus". He runs through the holy Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, He shines through the sacred page in the prophecy and Psalms and the New Testament and the Revelation, and if we are among those who were eternally appointed in the purposes of

God, carries us right through to that time when each one will see Him face to face. So, if you and I are favoured to have part and lot in the matter we shall need the help and grace and guidance of this same Jesus. It needs the same Jesus to take me to heaven that it needs to take you to heaven, and He is all sufficient, this same Jesus Whom they saw taken up into heaven. This can be food for our souls in this sense that those who believe in Him believe in Him as a living Jesus. It is a beautiful word the Lord gave to His disciples, "Because I live ye shall live also". It can be a sweet thought in the heart of an exercised one sometimes in the silence of the night to feel this precious truth that they have a living Jesus; and not only the fact that He is a living Jesus, but that He is one Who is able to save to the uttermost and to save all to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. I do not know of any one being turned away; not that we can rest ourselves as being secure upon the letter of truth, but at the same time we may feel a gracious encouragement in that He is not only willing to save but able to save. He is able to save them to the uttermost, not just the nicest of people who have the sweetest dispositions, who have everything to recommend them in a natural way, but to the uttermost, whatever poor wretches they feel themselves to be. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him". The power, the ability to save, as well as the willingness, rests upon His substitution and satisfaction. Justice does not look for anything, meritoriously viewed beyond Calvary; there the price was paid, "Hell is vanquished, heaven appeased, God is satisfied and pleased." Some of us are coming along to the latter part of our journey and how we need to have some sweet manifestation of Him by the Holy Spirit who takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. What the Holy Spirit shows you you are not likely to forget. You may forget what people tell you, but if the Holy Ghost shines into your soul you will never forget it. He does not change His mind on behalf of those for whom He suffered, here they are in a divine decree and their eternal redemption is secure; but in ourselves, in our own feelings, we may feel like those we read of in the

prophecy that they walk in darkness and have no light, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?". What are they to do? "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God".

It is a beautiful word and has been an encouragement to many and I believe it has to me, that even though you feel so dark, shut up, and bound yet whatever your condition "Let him trust in the name of his God".

"Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?". It was no wonder they were gazing up into heaven. They saw Him go up until He disappeared from their sight, until "a cloud received Him out of their sight". The same body that was nailed to the cross went into heaven, He rose again and ascended into heaven; sweet and blessed thought! So must the hymnwriter have felt when he said,

"A Man there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran
In hands, and feet, and side".

He goes on to say - "The same dear Man in heaven now reigns
That suffered for our sake"

Well, beloved friends, where do we stand, where do I stand, where do you stand? Can we feel a hope in the mercy of God? Has the Holy Spirit convinced you of sin, for that is His sacred office to convince of sin; and to whom but a convinced sinner is the Saviour desirable and necessary and vital? It is to those who are convinced of sin and are brought to feel their own condemnation under the law and yet in due time are favoured with some sweet view of Christ Who fulfilled the law and made it honourable.

"Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus" - not somebody else, not some representative, this same Jesus, beautiful word - "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"; so it is confirmed in other Scriptures concerning the Lord coming again. He shall come the second time without sin unto salvation. The end will come one day. We are not likely to live to see the end of time, although sometimes I have a feeling that according to the spacing of time 2,000 years have a mark that may come to the end of

time, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; but it will not help us to try to unravel things that are beyond us. We are on much safer ground when we can say with a good foundation,

"Tis a point I long to know,
(Oft it causes anxious thought),
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

The experimental feature of this is very sweet, "This same Jesus". Are you in the depths, are you in trouble, are you bearing burdens that nobody else knows anything of? You need this same Jesus for He can be your burden-bearer. How many times it has been that the Lord's people have felt they could cast all their care upon Him and He has carried the burden, carried the care, and brought you through. "This same Jesus". We need this same Jesus when we are assaulted by the temptations of the devil; he would overthrow our faith and hope and everything that we have felt to be so precious to us. He can attempt to tear it all to pieces and drive a poor thing to despair, but he will never do it if we have an interest in this same Jesus. "He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same".

Through our lives and when we come to the end of our days, (and this is often with me), we shall need this same Jesus to receive us at last into the heavenly city where we shall go no more out, but gaze upon the beauties of our glorious Emmanuel, what a prospect. Not only so, to feel a hope in the Gospel in our lives, our burdens, our trials, our difficulties is a sacred support. It bears us through. His dear people have one Who took their burdens, He understands them and regards them as the Apostle Peter has it "Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you".

So it is a blessed prospect. He shall come again "in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven", the day will come undoubtedly, and may not be long either, although that is a matter we must leave. But after all the great point is to feel in our poor souls that He loved me and gave Himself for me. Then the prospect is glorious, beyond words to describe. Oh to get a sight of Him, to see something of His suitability to your case, to see something of His power to deliver you and save you and to see something of the future in the view of faith that He will receive you. Here He is then and it is a beautiful word as incorporating the end of the world, the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He Himself refers to in the Gospels, "While they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus" - not somebody else, not a representative - "which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven". May we be favoured to be found among them whom He will receive in that great day. For if that is so, if we have an interest in this blessed Gospel, the best is to come. Amen.