

It Is Written

HN/SS 9/01/05 am

Reading: Jeremiah 31:23-40, I Peter 1

Study: John 6:45-46

Psalms: 104:1-6, 104:30-33, 86:1-6, 86:11-13

The Jews murmured among themselves at Jesus' claim to be the *bread which came down from heaven*. Jesus did not soften or change his message because of their grumbling. He did not try to make the truth more palatable for their rebellious and unbelieving hearts. The truth is the truth – it is absolute and cannot be changed. Jesus was sent from heaven by the Father. It was essential for them to believe this if they claimed to believe in God.

And also to believe that Jesus will raise up the believer in the last day. Jesus came down from heaven in order to raise up sinful men and women, men and women living in a fallen world; to raise them up at the last day, to live eternally with him and with the Father in heaven. He did not come down just to give them a better life in this world.

Jesus is not like the manna that Moses gave their fathers, for all who ate that bread died. Jesus is the true bread, the living bread, and those who feed on him by faith will live forever. Many people who call themselves Christians do not believe this. 'I believe in God and live a good life – that is what a Christian does' they say.

In answer to their grumbling Jesus said *no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him*. How does the Father draw people to himself? This word to 'draw' is used amongst other things to describe drawing up a fishing net with a catch. 'True indeed as to this kind of drawing it is not violent so as to compel men by external force; but still it is a powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit which makes men willing who formerly were unwilling and reluctant. It is a false and profane assertion therefore that none are drawn but those who are willing to be drawn' (Calvin). The Spirit of God quickens the soul and illuminates the heart through the word and the Spirit.

Jesus' declaration of divine election was in accord with what was written in the Scriptures. He was talking to Jews who knew the Old Testament. What he was revealing to them had been foretold by the prophets. The Jews were experts in the law, and they also knew the prophets, even if they did not understand all their writings. Jesus sought to explain to them that what he was saying was in accord with what was written, the very Scriptures that they read.

It is written

This was not the first time that Jesus stood firmly upon what was written in the Bible. Can you remember the first time? At the beginning of his ministry, there in the desert, the devil tempted Jesus. And Jesus answered saying *it is written* – it is written in Scripture, in the word of God. Now the Jews were confronting him, not believing what he said. It is written he said. He stood firmly on the infallible, unchanging, and inspired word of God.

Do you stand firm on the Scriptures? Do you find them a comfort in time of doubt and distress? Do you use the Bible to defend yourself against the devil or against human opponents and mockers? It is not human arguments that will convince unbelievers but the

word of God. The word is living and powerful, it is sharper than any two-edged sword; the word of God cuts to the heart.

Jesus of course knew the Scriptures. The apostle Paul knew the Scriptures also for he also argued and defended the gospel from Scripture itself. Let the word of God so fill our hearts and minds that it will be there on our tongue ready to go forth as a sharp sword – into our own heart or the heart of others. And let not the word become to us blunt or rusty. Keep it sharp and shiny through diligent study; learning of the Scriptures and daily prayer.

I was listening to bishop being interviewed on the BBC about the tsunami disaster. He spoke not a word of Scripture beyond ‘God is a God of love’. Did not God create the world he was asked. Oh yes but he left it run by itself. He would not do such a terrible thing as this. But what about the flood in the time of Noah – just a myth is it! This man struggled to answer as he relied solely upon human arguments. Jesus did not struggle. He declared *it is written in the prophets*

Taught by God

And they shall all be taught by God. The Old Testament, the Bible of Jesus and the Jews, was spoken of as the law and the prophets; the law, the former prophets and the later prophets. Jesus referred to a passage in Isaiah the prophet (54:13). Isaiah was addressing the restored city of Jerusalem – *all your children will be taught by the Lord and great will be your children’s peace.* ‘The passage is here applied typologically to the messianic community of the New Testament’. It is fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ.

Others passages teach the same truth. Jeremiah (31:33) said of that day, the day that had now come, *I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts – I will be their God and they shall be my people.* God initiated the old covenant (agreement) with the people and he initiates the new covenant, the new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ.

They shall all be taught by God. God will speak; he will speak to the hearts of men through his word. Those whom he calls will hear, and they will learn from the Father. And what they learn will be that Jesus is the Son of God that Jesus was sent by the Father to give life. There is no life apart from Jesus Christ. There is not truth apart from Jesus. Jesus is the way to the Father – *no one comes to the Father except through me.*

Seen the Father

In this context Jesus reminded the Jews that no man has ever seen God the Father. God spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to a friend. Moses saw the back of God but God said, *My face shall not be seen* (Exodus 33:23). God had appeared to the patriarchs in Theophanous. Ryle thinks that Jesus is here saying that these were all appearances of the second person of the trinity not the first.

But in the context Jesus is simply establishing his close relationship with the Father. He had come down from heaven, he was sent by the Father. Indeed he had seen the Father, something which no other man had ever claimed. In fact Jews believed that if they saw God they would die (Genesis 32:30).

We might reflect briefly on the disciple Philip – a Jew who followed Jesus. He went to find Nathaniel and said to him *we have found him of whom Moses wrote in the law and also the prophets – Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph* (1:45). Philip believed that Jesus was the

Messiah but was mistaken as to his paternity just like these Jews at Capernaum – he was not the son of Joseph.

When Jesus spoke about returning to his Father in chapter 14 Thomas asked how do we know the way and then Philip said, *Lord show us the Father that is sufficient for us* What a strange thing to say. Well not so strange to many people today. They say where is God, I cannot see God and if I can't see him he does not exist. Have you met anyone who says this or at least thinks like this?

Just what Philip wanted is not certain. But what Jesus said to him is certain. It is the next step on from what Jesus told the Jews in our text. *He who has seen me has seen the Father.*

Jesus came down from heaven. He was with the Father so had seen the Father. But not only was the word with God, the word was God. *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God.* And then in 1:18 – *no one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him or made him known.*

Jesus Christ is not only a great teacher. He is not just a prophet speaking the words of God. He is more than a prophet. He is God the Son. No prophet ever declared that he has seen the Father. No prophet ever declared that he who has seen me has seen the Father. In the light of such claims how can anyone believe that Jesus of Nazareth is not divine, that Jesus is not God the Son. The Jews knew what Jesus was claiming for himself and they determined to kill him for blasphemy. Beware those who teach that Jesus was not fully God.

Let us look to Jesus knowing that he did indeed reveal God the Father. Those who want to see God let them look to Jesus. We have a full and wonderful record of Jesus' life upon this earth. It was supremely in his death and resurrection that he revealed God the Father.

The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. He prayed *Father glorify me, together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was (17:5).* The Father answered that prayer in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

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