

## Speaking

Luke 3: 1-6; Proverbs 21: 28.

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NOV/DEC. 1969

In a coming day a personage (called "a beast") will emerge from amongst the nations (of which the sea is a symbol) to whom the dragon (Satan) will give his power and great authority, (Revelation 13). So outstanding will he be that the whole earth will wonder at him and will render homage to him. Among other things he will be characterised by "Speaking great things and blasphemies . . . against God." No one can deny that this character of speaking is becoming more and more prevalent in the world today — men vaunting themselves and decrying God, and alas! professing Christendom is in no wise immune. High sounding words; speculative theories as to creation etc.; completely unproved evolutionary ideas are all readily accepted and the inspired Word of God either perverted or rejected. In Acts 20 Paul warns the Ephesian believers "That after my departing . . . of your *own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things." The word perverse carries the thought of "twisting" the truth — an exact description of many in ecclesiastical circles today. Paul speaks of those who "pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1: 7); also of "perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds" (1 Timothy 6: 5). Peter too speaks of "false prophets . . . and many shall follow their pernicious ways . . . the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2: 1, 2). Jude refers to those whose "mouths speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (v. 16).

Is there no ray of light? Indeed there is — *God is still speaking*. Precious indeed was the character and purport of divine speaking when Jesus, the Son of God, was here on earth. "This is My beloved Son: hear Him" was the command from the glory, and happy the portion of those who obeyed! "We have heard Him ourselves," said the men of Samaria, and doubts and prejudices gave place to certainty and truth — "We *know* that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Men "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth": words of compassion assuaging the grief of the doubly bereft widow of Nain; words which dispelled the overwhelming sorrow of Mary in the garden; words which on the Emmaus road caused hearts drooping with disappointment to burn with immeasurable joy. Blessedly indeed did our beloved Lord fill out the prophetic utterance of Isaiah 50: 4! But He spake with authority too. Stormy winds and mounting waves were quiescent; the grave and corruption yielded up their prey at His command. Well might His enemies exclaim "Never man spake like this Man." He could refer to Himself as "A Man that hath told you the truth," (John 8: 40). His speaking was indeed unique!

Above all else the words of our precious Saviour revealed the eternal love of the heart of God. How full the Gospels are of this blessed theme. Darkness, hatred, fear and death in a world of sin, displaced by the light of life, eternal love, abounding joy and the consciousness of victory over death in the heart that receives and cherishes His word.

*God is still speaking*. In sovereign mercy and matchless grace He has secured for Himself vessels "sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2: 21). Blessed indeed to be "set apart" in our affections from the apostate condition of things around and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to be marked by "Sound speech, that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2: 8). A few of the features which normally characterise such believers may be considered.

The condition of things surrounding the ministry of John the Baptist in Luke 3 and the ministry

itself have a clear dispensational setting — but there are moral lessons for us to take account of today. Foreign elements had brought the people of God into bondage; the ecclesiastical position was marked by division. In similar conditions obtaining today it is good to note that God is fully cognisant of the whole matter; the duration of rule and the sphere of influence wielded by the powers that be are all measured by Him, but amongst them all He finds nothing to which He can commit His word. These divine communications (verse 2) came *upon* (which is more intimate than "unto") John "in the wilderness." Moral suitability for the reception of God's word necessitates a pathway of separation from all that the mind of man has introduced. Involvement in the political and the nominal religious institutions around will militate against a clear understanding of what God is saying. The word used in verse 2 (Rhema) has the force, among other things, of command, and the understanding of this would enable us (as John Baptist) to speak with authority and power and an absence of all partiality.

"A man that heareth speaketh constantly" — or in victory; unchallenged; with *lasting effect*. Who would not desire, in a world marked by compromise, deceit and untruth, to have the ability — by the Spirit of Truth — to speak in this way? We, as the Baptist in John 10, may do no miracle, but let us so speak in the things of God that we, too, may have the testimony given to him, "All things that John spake of this Man were true." Ponder the result — "and many believed on Him there" (verse 42). In his pastoral epistles Paul several times uses the expression "This is a faithful saying." Writing thus to Titus he adds — "These things I will that thou affirm constantly." Soberly and sincerely Titus was to seriously affirm the truth of what he spoke and this in the face of general lying (Titus 1: 12). Rhoda in Acts 12, having recognised the apostle's voice, could not be moved from her constant affirmation even in the face of unbelief amongst her brethren. Remembering again the moral tone of Luke's writings do we not see (without straining Scripture) the necessity of listening to what the apostles say in their writings if we are to stand firm in testimony to the truth in these days of error and turning from the truth? Referring to *false* prophets, John says, "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; . . . hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4: 5, 6).

Sitting in lowly contentment at the feet of Jesus, as Mary in Luke 10, receiving His words by faith into our souls, is surely a necessary attitude if we are to speak rightly of Him. Paul in writing to the Corinthians quotes Psalm 116, "I *believed*, therefore have I *spoken*", and adds "we also believe, and therefore speak." Assimilating the truth ourselves, formed by it, kept by the Spirit of Truth in living touch with Him who is the Truth — may we know increasingly the power and import of the word — "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4: 11).