

The Lord Jesus in John 1: 43 — John 2

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The Lord may be traced in this scripture, as One Who ranges, if I may so express it, through different regions of divine glory, in the calm and perfect sense of this, that they all belong to Him, and are fully and properly His own.

In His intercourse with Nathanael, the Lord Jesus shows Himself to be the One Who touches the deep springs that are in man, conversing in power with the spirits of all flesh, remaking man also, re-creating him after His own mind, and stamping a new character upon him, as for eternity. He lets this Israelite know, that He had been with him under the fig-tree, ere Philip had called him, and that He was there with him, remodelling his mind and character, giving him, as it were, a new condition of being, making him, according to the divine oracle in Psalm 32, "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

It was the Spirit of God that alone could thus converse with Nathanael's soul, and form him anew, as was done under the fig-tree. And thus it is, that Jesus here rises on the conscience of that Israelite in the glory of God; and under the weight and sense of that glory he worships Him.

This is a very wondrous moment. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Jesus, the power which Jesus uses in divine sovereign grace. The Lord Jesus is before us here, as the Jehovah of the day of Gideon. Jehovah addressed Gideon according to His own counsel about him, or as such an one as His own Spirit was making him. "Thou mighty man of valour," says the Lord to Gideon, though at that time he was but a poor man of Manasseh, threshing wheat in his father's threshing-floor at Ophrah. But, in the counsel of God, and by the energy of the Spirit, Gideon was the leader of the host of Israel against Midian; and the angel spoke in divine intelligence to him, or as the One who know the purpose of God respecting him. So is it here. Jesus addressed Nathanael, as Nathanael was under the operation of the Holy Ghost, imparting to him the character of a guileless Israelite. This operation had been going on with Nathanael in the solitude of the fig-tree, and that operation Jesus was divinely acquainted with.

Jesus was thus visiting the soul as God alone can visit it. He was touching the very springs within, and forming man after a new model. And in this most blessed and wondrous way, we track Jesus through one peculiar region of divine glory, and see Him there, in the power of His own Spirit, doing divine work. And He is there, as at home, as One that had title to be there without wrong or robbery. For what, I may ask, of divine prerogative is not His? What region of divine power may He not survey and measure as His own? Be they deep or high, be they where the Spirit of God alone can work, or be they where the finger of God alone can work, where the strength of God alone can be felt, or the wisdom of God alone can enter, Jesus will occupy them all, as all His own. And thus we find Him, as we pass on through this fine scripture.

There was, a marriage in Cana, and Jesus is invited. He goes — and He is there in His despised, rejected form, as among men. Man has objects worthier of his regard, and Jesus is nobody in the presence of the bridegroom, and the guests, and the governor of the feast. But, though the world knew Him not, it was made by Him. And accordingly He touches the springs of nature here, as afore, in the person of Nathanael, He had touched the spirits of men. He re-creates, he re-forms, the material found in the kingdom around, as He, had already done with the materials found in the kingdom within. He turns the water into wine, at this marriage feast in Cana.

This was what the finger of God, that once garnished the heavens, alone could do, — the voice of God that once said, "Let there be light, and there was light." But in this, Jesus is seen in another region. He is God still, but God acting in another place or sphere of power, in the kingdom of nature, and not in the secret place of the spirits of all flesh. But it is the same unspeakable blessed God of glory that we track, whether here or there, and Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the stranger on earth, Jesus the guest of the marriage at Cana, is He.

But do we, I ask, delight to see the Lord Jesus thus traversing regions where God alone could find and know His way? Is this sight of His glories grateful to us? With all the grace which the thick veil of His humiliation casts over it, our spirits should have the same communion with the person of Jesus as with the presence of God. For it is God, though manifest in the flesh, we know in Him, — and faith, therefore, worships. Man He was in deepest, fullest verity; of flesh and blood partaker; but He was the Word made flesh. And there is no region of the divine glory that he does not tread in the calm, assured power, and conscious right, which alone befit that only One to Whom they all belong.

But, again. He purifies the temple, His Father's house. But He does this as the God of the temple: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This was building houses as God alone could build them: "Every house is builded of some man, but he that built all things is God." To build by creation, or by resurrection, as here, is divine architecture, and Jesus is a divine builder: "He spake of the temple of His body."

He had touched, as we saw, the springs of the spirit of man, and of nature, and now he touches the very sources or foundations of the power of death. And this is another region which belongs to God — part of His dominions. And Jesus, after this manner, as we still track Him through this scripture, is still God, God in the mighty strength of God down in the place of death, as before He had been God with the voice or finger of God abroad in the realm of nature, or with the Spirit of God, in the place of the spirits of all flesh. "In John's Gospel," as one has said, "Jesus is God comedown from heaven." Nature is not too wide a region for him, the spirit of man that is in him is not too secret a region for Him, or death and the grave too deep or profound or mighty a region. He visits each and all of them in divine grace, divine power, or divine triumph, and leaves every where the same witness that God Himself had been there.

We have, however, another path of the glory of Christ, still to follow in this scripture.

He had been doing miracles; and it is said, "Many believed on Him when they saw the miracles. that He did" — but then it is added, "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

Here is God again. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart."

Jesus did not know man, or the springs and energies of corrupt nature, by reason of any fellowship with them, for He had no such fellowship. The prince of this world had nothing in Him. He was "that holy thing" — "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." But still, as this passage tells us, "He knew what was in man." He knew it all, and that it was deceitful above all things. He searched the hearts and tried the reins of the children of men. He knew all men, not one more than another, but He tried the reins; He knew what was in man. He, who by His prophet, had long ago declared that man was deceitful above all things, now (when He stood in the midst of men), would not commit Himself unto them."

This was divine acquaintance with man. This was full, radical, perfect understanding of man,

after the manner of the divine mind. — Jesus was God in His knowledge of man. What Jehovah declared Himself to be by His prophet, Jesus is now declared to be by the evangelist. Jesus knew nothing of revolted man, or of the heart's corruption by sympathy, but He knew it all as God, Who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men, to give every man according to his ways; as He does here; for He denies man His confidence, as "deceitful above all things" and thus, according to his ways, unworthy of that confidence.

Here again, then, the Lord Jesus takes the way of God, and ranges again through another region that belongs only to God.

We see Him thus, beloved. God He is, wherever God may be known or tracked. God, in the place of the spirits of all flesh; God, in the kingdom of nature; God, in victor-strength over death and the grave; God, as searching the hearts and reins of the children of men.

Jesus is there where God alone could be; and there, in all the settled ease and certainty of One Who knew those regions as His own. In grace unutterable He has known the homestead of the human family, and been an inhabitant of the village of Nazareth — the Son of man, He has lived and walked with the children of men, eaten of their bread and drunk of their cup, known their toils and their sorrows in all their reality, and at their hand suffered reproach and rejection and death, but He was equally at home where the Spirit of God alone could work, where the voice of God alone could be heard and command, where the strength of God alone could prevail, and where the light or knowledge of God alone could enter and search.

He ranges all the dominions of God, and is no trespasser. There is no robbery of a glory that is another's; it is His own. He is the Former of light, the Creator of the ends of the earth; the One who touches the springs of nature, and they come forth in forms such as His fingers fashion and His voice commands.

This is so; and we can track it all here in this scripture, without doubt or difficulty. But in the midst of all this, there is a thing betrayed, though incidentally, which, in hope of further profit, I will notice.

The Mother, in a general sense, knew the glory and power of the Lord, but she knew not the season or the moral order of that glory; and this is, wherever it appears, a great evil. She said to Him at the feast, "they have no wine," desirous that He should display Himself. She was as one that said, "Show thyself to the world" (John 7: 4). But she greatly erred. His time for this had not come. He will indeed, manifest His power in the souls of His elect now; He will, by His Spirit, visit Nathanael under the fig-tree; He will recreate a sinner, and give him a new character for eternity; and He will own such chosen ones, and know them, and address them in their new place, and read out to them as it were, the writing that is written of them in the Book of Life, as here in His earliest welcome of the man of Cana. He will do all this now; but He will not as yet shine in a glory that the world can appreciate. "My time," says He, "is not yet come." The Mother, therefore, did greatly err. A common error, and never more common than in this day in which we live. "show us a sign from heaven," was the craving of hearts that knew not the Christ, the Son of God, because the god of this world had blinded their eyes. But Jesus gave them another kind of sign altogether, "the sign of Jonas the prophet." He must be known in humiliation in such a world as this, if known aright. The Mother took the place and part of the world in this suggestion, "They have no wine," and she is rebuked — "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" Her worldly-mindedness is rebuked. Jesus could have no sympathy with it.

Not only, however, is she rebuked, she fails also, to see the glory that the Lord will display; and this has great meaning in it for us.

He makes the water wine. He supplies the table as the divine Lord, or Creator, of the feast. But the governor of the feast knew nothing of this, the bridegroom knew nothing of it, the guests knew nothing of it, the Mother was not in the secret or the vision of it; it was only the servants who had this secret in the midst of them, and the disciples who had this manifestation of glory made to them.

All this has great meaning in it for us. The Mother lost, in spirit, what she had, in the mind of the world, sought after. And so with us. As far as we are, in spirit, one with the world, so far must we be left without discoveries of the glory of the Son of God, or communion with Him. For He is not of the world; His time for manifestation in it is not yet come; it must be judged and re-fashioned, ere that can be. And according to the moral of such a truth as that, the Mother, on this occasion, is rebuked and is left without the manifestation of that glory in which the Son could shine and did shine. Those, and those only, who were in the due place, the servants and the disciples, are let into the secret, and get the vision; for they filled, morally, the very opposite place of the Mother. She was of the world, but they are nobody in the scene. The governor of the feast had his dignity, the bridegroom his joy, the guests their good cheer, and the Mother a mother's vanity and expectations; but the servants and the disciples are nothing, and seek for nothing beyond what service or discipleship called them to, and they learn the secret of His power, and behold the manifestation of His glory.

What a lesson for us in the midst of these discoveries of Him Who was "God manifest in the flesh"! We must awake, we that are sleeping with the world, if we would get more of the light of the Lord.