

Bethel

Pulpit

The Lord's Dwelling Place

Sermon Number 450

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 3rd July, 2022**

Text: *“Master, where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see”
(John 1. 38, 39).*

This is a wonderful chapter, but the second half of it seems completely different. Really, it is an account of the Lord Jesus calling five unworthy sinners to the knowledge of Himself, five unworthy sinners who all later became disciples, and every case completely different. If you carefully look at them, in one case it was John the Baptist's preaching; in another it was Andrew's personal testimony; in another it was the Lord Jesus speaking Himself. It is that point which has been emphasised so much here in recent times, and rightly so: the mysterious sovereignty of God in calling sinners by grace. There are no two cases alike. Wherever the Lord works in sinners' hearts, they are all led to the same place: a sacred, saving knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now here we have John the Baptist gloriously preaching by the River Jordan, by Bethsaida. The day before he had uttered that blessed word, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” It seems there was a crowd of people there. It seems there was no effect of it. Even the Lord and Saviour preaching Himself, there was no effect of it. But then here it seems more of a private occasion. There were just two men listening. It is clear that one of them was Andrew and the other was John himself. The Lord Jesus preached the same word. We poor ministers cannot help repeating ourselves, but sometimes even if we are fearful, and we think we are mistaken, it is Holy Ghost emphasis, and what had no effect the first time has a blessed and gracious effect the second time.

“Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” What an effect! “The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” That is what it has ever been in a true preaching of the everlasting gospel: they “heard *him* speak,” but they left him; they did not follow him;

“they followed Jesus.” That is the great, the vital point: to be a follower of the Lord the Lamb. It does seem to me that this word, “They followed Jesus,” in its immediate sense means just literally. It seems the Lord Jesus was moving along, so they followed after Him. Then of course in its fullest sense, it is that divine truth: “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” “The two disciples heard him speak” – John the Baptist speak – “and they followed Jesus.” That was John the Baptist’s desire: “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

“Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?” Now of course, the Lord Jesus knows everything. He knows the hearts of all men. He knows every thought. So He did not put this question because He did not know the answer. He wanted to search them out. What was their purpose? Was it just emotion? Was it just carnal interest? What was it? Was there something more? “Jesus ... saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto Him, Rabbi.” They had not yet gone that step further to call Him Lord, but they still called Him Master. “Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest Thou? The Lord Jesus said, Come and see.” What a word this is! There was nothing secretive about the gospel.

I remember some years ago there was someone up in the Midlands wrote to our friend Mr. Watts and said, “I just cannot understand the religion of your chapel. There seems something secret about it, something you do not want to let anyone know, something that cannot be revealed.” Mr. Watts was quite surprised with that letter. He wrote very kindly on the lines of this: there is nothing hidden, nothing secret. It is still, “Come and see.”

“They came and saw where He dwelt.” I wonder if it must have been a surprise, because the dear Lord Jesus had no special dwelling place. Can you remember what He said? “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” So we do not know where the place was where at that time the Lord Jesus had His dwelling place. One of the godly commentators who understood these things and who understood the geography of the Holy Land suggested it might even have been just a cave, because there were many caves in the district round Jordan.

“Come and see.” So if these two who followed the Lord Jesus were still holding those carnal views that so many people had at that time, that the Lord Jesus had come to set up an earthly kingdom, they would have been disappointed. “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.” “They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour,” which according to the Jewish reckoning would be four o’clock in the afternoon. The suggestion seems to be that they stayed, and perhaps they stayed that night.

What I specially, with the Lord’s help, want to bring before you this evening is this question of the two disciples: “Master, where dwellest Thou?” They wanted to be where Jesus was. They wanted to be near Him. They wanted to hear His voice. They wanted to listen to Him. They wanted to be graciously taught by Him. I wonder if that is the feeling of any of you here this evening, perhaps some of you younger ones.

“Where Jesus is, there would I be,
To see His lovely face.”

That was just it. That is why they asked this question: “Master, where dwellest Thou?” They asked it in humility. They wanted to be led by the Saviour. They wanted to be where He was. But having said all these things, mainly by way of introduction, this is the great and vital and important question: where is the dwelling place of our Lord and God? Where does He dwell?

Of course, there are several answers to that. He dwells *in heaven*. He sits on the throne. He ever lives, He ever reigns. He is almighty. The government is upon His shoulder. That is where our Lord and God dwells, in the highest heaven. It is His by everlasting right, His by grace, His by possession, doubly His by redemption, and when you think of the ascended Saviour ever living, ever reigning on high, almighty, in complete control, nothing taking Him by surprise, nothing too hard for Him.

“Master, where dwellest Thou?” He dwells on that throne of light in heaven above. It reminds us, of course, of that question that was asked when the prophet Elijah was taken up into heaven. “Where is the Lord God

of Elijah?” Where is He? And Elisha immediately learned two answers to that: that the God of Elijah was in heaven, but the God of Elijah was still with His people. Very quickly he proved it. There was a difficulty. There was an impossibility: the crossing of the River Jordan, and Elijah with divine power performed that miracle. They went across on dry ground, and Elisha took the mantle of Elijah, and he smote the waters, and the waters divided, and he freely went over, proving that Elijah’s God was almighty. He still lived and reigned. He is almighty today. The most impossible thing is easy. He still says, “The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it.”

O but this is the second point: He is *with His people*. “Master, where dwellest Thou?” “Come and see.” He is still with His people. He loves them with an everlasting love. He has chosen them. He has redeemed them. He will never leave them nor forsake them. What a wonderful truth it is that Almighty God, our Saviour, condescends to be graciously present with His poor, unworthy, sinful people, and He is present with the feeblest of them, present with the most unworthy of them! What does His presence mean? That He will do everything for them, everything they need; that He will help them; He will uphold them; He will answer their prayers; He will deliver them; He will supply all their needs, “according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” It is a wonderful thing if we are blessed with faith to see this two-fold dwelling place of the Lord the Lamb: almighty in heaven; graciously present with His people.

And lingering on this point: the Lord’s presence with His people, in a special way *in the house of God*, in our solemn assemblies, as we sing,

“While prostrate at His feet we bow,
As ‘God with us’ He’s present now.”

Do you believe it? That wonderful truth, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst.” I remember the old preachers used to add this: “And that to bless.”

“Master, where dwellest Thou?” “Come and see.” O but to be helped by the Spirit of God to realise the Lord’s gracious presence with us *in our troubles and fears*, in our lives, in our prayers, in our ups and downs,

in our assemblies, in the church of God. Whatever would we do apart from the Lord's abiding presence with His people!

"Master, where dwellest Thou? ... "Come and see." If the Lord Jesus is specially present with His people in their solemn assemblies for worship, it seems in a special way He delights to be present *at the Lord's table*, His own appointment. "This do in remembrance of Me."

"Do this,' He cried, 'till time shall end,
In memory of your dying Friend!
Meet at My table, and record
The love of your departed Lord.'"

When we meet this evening for the Lord's supper, may we sweetly be favoured to know and feel His love. May there be that sacred realisation that He is present with us, that He is there to bless – the broken body, the poured-out cup, the broken bread signifying His dreadful sufferings even unto death, and the poured-out cup, the preciousness of His precious, sin-atoning blood. There is a glory shines around us when we meet at the Lord's table to show forth His death till He shall come. O may we know it and feel it and experience it and be thankful for it!

"Master, where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see." Now I want to take this just a little closer. You perhaps say, How can you go any closer than some of these things you have been speaking about? Well, it is this. Shall I put it to you in Scripture? "That Christ may dwell *in your hearts* by faith."

"Unworthy dwelling! glorious Guest!
Favour astonishing, divine!"

It is an amazing thing – it is almost unbelievable, but faith does believe it – that Christ is not only present with His people, but He dwells in their hearts by faith; that wonderful truth: "Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

"Master, where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see." O but to witness this, and it is in the hearts of all the Lord's people, not just the apostles, right down to the feeblest, that Christ is dwelling in their hearts by faith. There is a very wonderful scripture on this in Isaiah chapter 57 – where Christ dwells with His people. Listen to these remarkable words:

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place” – listen – “with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

No doubt some of you will have heard that little story. There was a very poor man one Lord’s day morning quietly going home at the end of the morning service, and who should meet him but a very notorious atheist – not just an ordinary sort of man who says, “I don’t believe in God,” but I think it was the famous, atheistic philosopher, David Hume, who according to the flesh was famous as a great man. He met this poor old man slowly walking home from chapel, and accosted him like this. He said, “Please sir, is your God a great God or a little God?” The poor old man said, “Sir, He is so great that ‘the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him’; He is so small that He can dwell in my poor, unworthy heart.”

Now what a blessed answer to a question like that! It is all based on Scripture. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him *also*” – O that blessed *also*! – “that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

“Master, where dwellest Thou? ... Come and see.” And then finally, the Lord’s dwelling place is *in heaven above* for ever and ever with all His people, where

“Glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land”;

where there is no sin or sorrow or suffering. “The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away *all tears* from their eyes.”

It will be a wonderful mercy if you and I are brought safely through, safely landed. That is the place where the Lord dwells, the risen Saviour in all His glory, where He dwells to all eternity. The wonder of wonders is this: that poor, wretched, guilty sinners saved by free and sovereign grace will be favoured to dwell with Him, and to dwell with Him for ever. O is it your concern that in the great day you will be safely landed, you will be

found there? That beautiful word that closes the twenty-third Psalm: “*Surely*” – there is no uncertainty about any of these things! “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” This is it: “and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

“Master, where dwellest Thou? He saith unto them, Come and see.”

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When mourners stand and hear me tell
What beauties in my Saviour dwell,
Where He is gone they fain would know,
That they may seek and love Him too.

My best Beloved keeps His throne
On hills of light, in worlds unknown;
But He descends and shows His face
In the young gardens of His grace.

In vineyards, planted by His hand,
Where fruitful trees in order stand,
He feeds among the spicy beds,
Where lilies show their spotless heads.

He has engrossed my warmest love;
No earthly charms my soul can move;
I have a mansion in His heart,
Nor death nor hell shall make us part.

He takes my soul, ere I’m aware,
And shows me where His glories are;
No chariots of Amminadib
The heavenly rapture can describe.

O may my spirit daily rise
On wings of faith above the skies;

Till death shall make my last remove,
To dwell for ever with my Love.

I. Watts