



“WHOM SAY YE THAT I AM?”

(MATT. XVI.)

NOTES FROM A LECTURE

BY

J. E. B.

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LONDON:

ROBERT L. ALLAN, 15 PATERNOSTER ROW;  
AND 75 SAUCHIEHALL STREET, GLASGOW.

DUBLIN: TRACT DEPOT, 13 WESTLAND ROW.

WORCESTER: THE TRACT DEPOT, 8 FORGATE STREET.



PRICE TWOPENCE.

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MATT. XVI.

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BEFORE speaking on this Scripture, I would like, beloved friends, to say a word or two about the establishment of your own souls, for I hold this to be necessary as a previous enquiry, in order to enter into what is presented here, which has nothing to do with our state before God. When you think of the *ministry* which you have heard and received from God—What is it? Is it all about yourself, or is it about His Son? That is the point I want to start with. Let me ask a natural man, and he will say—I must begin from myself. I hope this is quite plain.

The difference between the former dispensation and the present is, that if you put yourself back under the Law, with Moses, he commands you, and says, “*Thou shalt*” and “*Thou shalt not*”—that is, man was under responsibility to God. This was the ministry by Moses; but, beloved, let me ask you, what ministry are *you* under? Every one here ought to be able to

give an answer. Are you under the schoolmaster-ministry of Moses, who takes *you* in hand, and says, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not?" For myself, I say, I am not!

Now, I will show you what ministry I am under, and I love to do this from Scripture, and not in words of my own. There is a verse occurs to me in the 1st of Hebrews; it is about *who* is speaking to us. The question is, What ministry am I under? This chapter says, "God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by *His Son*." Observe, *this* is the ministry we are under—*God* speaking, not by Moses, nor by prophets, but by *His Son*. I want you to see, beloved, what is the source and the character of this wonderful ministry that you are brought into, as the objects of divine grace. God speaks, and He speaks by His Son.

I will turn to Romans 1st on another point. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God (which He had promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures), concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." *This* is the subject-matter of the ministry presented to us, and it is important that our souls should get clear about this. Is God demanding something of *me*? No! He has brought me a ministry, "the Gospel of God."

He speaks to me about His Son, and when the Son speaks (as in John) it is about the Father; and if I ask you why it is you like the Gospel of John so much, and even some chapters more than others, you may not be able to reply; but the instincts of the new nature have found in it what suits them. If a person asked me that question, I should give him this answer—Because in the Gospel of John I get the Son upon earth, and the ministry of the Son introduces the Father—therefore you find in John, and nowhere else, “the Father’s house.” It is a part of the ministry of the Son. He came to declare the Father. He said to Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” He goes to prepare a house for the children—“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” No wonder you like it, for it is the ministry of the Son upon earth, introducing the Father, and revealing the Father, as He alone could do.

Now let me shew you another truth. There is one verse in the 17th of John I would refer to,—“This is *life* eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” What is life eternal? “To know Thee.” I get an object *outside* myself: look, it is not eternal life to know a poor wretched thing like myself, but “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God,

and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." *That* is the ministry I want, and let me ask, how are you getting on with it? *This* is what Christianity is: oh, look at it—"To know Thee the only true God," and, shall I say the One dearest to God, "Jesus Christ." The Holy Ghost, too, as the Comforter, and as the Spirit of Truth, is sent down from the Father to abide with us. What a wonderful *ministry!* It is overwhelming, because it does *not* make a claim upon us—because it comes in all its own plenitude and grace. God speaks to us by His Son, and we learn from the 2nd verse of the 17th chapter that we get eternal life in that Son, as well as a revelation of the Father—"As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." Where is the competent *power* to link us with it? The Spirit of Truth. Who does He guide? *You*, and into *all* truth; like the Son when on earth, He did not speak of Himself, but of the Father. He would have been out of His place if He had not spoken of His Father. So the Holy Ghost speaks of Christ—"He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of *mine*, and shall show it unto you."

The circle of our blessing is complete, and the very germ of that blessedness is entered into by that Spirit, which links us to the One who has put us in the bosom of the Father's love; and may I ask, Are your souls

dwelling *there*? If they are not, where *are* they?—that is the question. Well, beloved, wherever you are, I ask that you may see *who* it is that God has sent; and that as to yourself personally there is not a spot upon you, as viewed in the perfect work of Christ, and you ought to look at yourself *there*. It is of great moment to see where you look at yourself, whether as a saint or sinner. I look at myself in the light of Christ's perfect acceptance before God—nor can you learn your standing anywhere else. Because of what I am *in* myself, I look *out* of myself to the perfect work of Christ. What will God do in consequence of that perfect work? He says, “I have blotted out all your sins; I will remember them no more for ever.” So much for my sins, and as to myself, He adds, “I have given you life in the risen One.” How must you have it? By the power of the quickening Spirit. As the Lord said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” All the wise men of the world have never discovered this. If I were speaking to such, I would ask them—“In your philosophy, do you recognise the fact that a man must be born twice?” Every believer here would say, “I know what it is to have been born a second time; I am not going to Heaven to be born of God, nor to get eternal life; but because I have it.” The wise men leave out the quickening power of the

Holy Ghost; and thus their schemes only embrace the reformation of man, and the rectification of this world. Are these two objects indissolubly connected in your thoughts with redemption by the blood of Christ, and His title as the risen Son of Man in glory? If so, you are right.

The moment a soul sees Christ as the One by whom God speaks and acts, himself and the whole world are turned round. Are your souls thus put in association with Christ for everything? I would like to see you disconnected from yourself, as distinctly as a carriage from the railway train, and left behind. *Christ* has left man in the flesh behind at the Cross; *He* would not be burdened with it further, nor should we. I have done with myself; and if not, God *has* done with me; but, you will have to distinguish between these things; for a person may say, "I have not done with myself," nevertheless I say, "God has done with you;" and the Christian is one who takes part with God against himself. Moses began with *I*; but I ask, has God crucified that old man or not? "Your old man is crucified with Him." This is Christianity.

I only intend these as prefatory remarks, because I did not like to carry you on into the truth of the Church, until you could say, "I am in perfect peace and rest in God, and have life in this Christ—eternal life. 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true

God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.’ Moreover, we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us—the Spirit of Truth to glorify Christ; and to link us with Him where He now is.” I ask, is there a blessed man upon earth? Yes, the man who is thus occupied with Christ; there is no end to his present peace, “a peace which passeth all understanding; keeping the heart and mind through Christ Jesus.”

Having said this, I will now come to the Scriptures which I purpose to dwell upon a little. I go back to the 16th chapter of Matthew and the 13th verse, “When Jesus came into the coasts of *Cesarea Philippi*, He asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” When I think of the Church, I love to begin with this 16th chapter of Matthew for two or three reasons. In the first place, it is Christ who says to Peter, “Whom do ye say that I am? and Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Here it is not a question of Peter, but of Christ the Son of the living God. This is the germ of Christianity—“Whom do ye say that I am?” Is Christ the one grand and absorbing Person before the soul? The Lord loves to be discovered, and asks you, “Whom do ye say that I am?” Now, here it is not a question of the Father—it is not Jesus saying to Philip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” No, Jesus speaks about Himself—“Peter, whom do ye say

that I am?" "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and Jesus replies to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon." Had he *done* anything? No.

We read in the 14th verse, there were many conjectures, but only one true answer to that great question; but is this all that is known of this stranger? Can Simon's faith take up this Messiah in higher character than the Son of Man? Yes, says Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Shall I read this and think Peter said *it*, or may I not say it for myself. What is the value to your soul of "Blessed art thou!" I will not give it up. Now, that the Lord is found out, he adds, "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven." Be sure you don't take your own confession of Christ *lower*; the weakness begins when you dissociate yourself from the Father. "My Father" has *revealed* this to you! Oh, what a point this is to take Christ from. It is not, beloved, that when you were converted you heard a powerful sermon; but *God* spoke that word to me—God spoke to me by that person who was speaking—God did it. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Have you got *that*? It is not attainment; it is what God *gives*.

But to proceed, "Upon this rock I will build my Church."

This is the first time we have the Church spoken of; that is why I refer to it. The letter A of Church teaching is the 16th of Matthew—that is, a certain person makes a confession of who Christ is, and the Lord says, “Upon *this rock* I will build my Church.” There you get properly Church-security and Church-building, and, if you think of Church-extension, it is “On this rock *I* build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” If Christ builds, and upon such a foundation, what must be the superstructure? Was there ever such a rock as this confession of Christ as “the Son of the living God?” Never. As to Church-security—what shall I think of that? “The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it!”

Observe, in the 21st verse (chap. xvi.), “From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Here is a new thing in prospect, because it is “*I* will build,” and therefore “From that time forth” (you know why it was, and I know too) Jesus began to say He “must suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.” What a wonderful way to build the Church—“be killed, and be raised again the third day;” that is the whole secret to it. He was killed, but he is raised again by the power of God, and

so the foundation of the Church is upon the death and resurrection of Christ; but that was beyond Peter's conception, for Peter says, "This be far from Thee;" but the Lord replies, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Oh, what a word of rebuke to Peter!

If you think of the Church's foundation, do you connect all your ideas of it with the death and resurrection of Christ? Nobody can be in the Church who does not say like Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and how sweet to hear the Lord's reply, "*Blessed art thou!*" Oh, what a thing it is to know that this is true of you, and of every believer in Christ; and I am sure we can say more of the Person than Peter did then, because the Holy Ghost is come down.

There is another thing comes out here (24th verse), "Then said Jesus, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Discipleship is founded on this new ground—"For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it." It is the same ground that Christ took for Himself in reference to the Church. He gave Himself for it—laid down His life—and now His word is, "If any man will be my disciple, let him lose his life, to keep it." "Whosoever shall lose his life for *my sake* shall find it." What is Christ's worth to you, beloved? If I

have got a life by which to express my value of Christ, I can pour it out for Him—and mark, this is not martyrdom; but loyalty to Christ in a world that has *rejected* Him. We say, if it has cast Christ out, we are outcasts too; and therefore I hope you are in the judgment of this world, throwing your life away? If you see a man seeking to follow Christ and please Him, what does the world say of him? He is throwing his life entirely away. Ah! I like to hear that, because he stakes it for Christ, and another day will show whether it is a lost life or not. “Whosoever will lose his life for my sake”—that is, to take no part in the principles and actions of the world, no, not even its wisdom, for that is just the worst part of it. I will have Christ for my wisdom, as well as for my righteousness. This stands the first in that precious catalogue: “Christ is made unto us *wisdom*, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

Now, let me pass to this 18th chapter of Matthew, where you get the “twos and threes.” You have had in the 16th chapter the confession of an individual: here you get the twos and threes like Peter. The disciples of the 16th chapter pass into the “two or three” of the 18th chapter, though this is not Headship—but “There am I.”

I might say the 16th chapter is the letter A of Church truth; the 18th chapter is letter B. “Where

two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Let me ask you, was Christ on earth when He said that? Yes; then He was not Head of the Church. He was neither Head of the Church, nor was the Holy Ghost given. It was "two or three gathered together in His name." Blessed centre, and never to be given up. It was the ground on which the few at Pentecost were gathered in the upper chamber at Jerusalem. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name"—holds equally good for prayer, as we are told in the 19th verse. Look what a place the Lord puts us into. We have come out of the 16th Matt. as disciples denying ourselves, and now He shelters us by saying, "There am I in the midst of them." Oh, what a warrant is this! as to our walk and place of dependence; but is it not a circle of blessing?

Let us pass on to the 20th of John, 17th verse, where we meet the Lord in resurrection. In the 16th of Matt. He was to be killed and rise again, and here He *is risen* again; but even this position is not final, for He says, "Touch me not, I am not yet *ascended* unto my Father." Observe another thing He does, in the 22nd verse, "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Thus, they received something *further*, the Holy Ghost. He breathes on them as the Risen Man, and draws them into closer

relation to Himself. And yet this could not be properly the Holy Ghost, because they were told to tarry in Jerusalem for “the promise of the Father”—but it was the increased *power* of life in this risen Christ, by which he drew them into closer association with Himself, and moreover says to them, “I not only put you into relationship with myself, but I ascend to ‘my Father and your Father, and to my God and to your God.’”

But even this is not complete, for if we turn to the 1st of Acts we see a further bestowment. He says, I ascend, but you *tarry* for the promise of the Father. “For John truly baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” What a Church! Is it any wonder that the Devil says, if I cannot prevail against *that* Church, I’ll draw a vail over the hearts of those in it, and get the people to make a Church. We should never have heard of an Œcumenical Council at Rome—never—if it had not been that man had built something that suited himself, like the children of Israel at the Mount when they degraded themselves by their golden calf. Now, men’s abilities are put together, and they set up a Church, and hence all these things we see round about us; we ought to be ashamed of ourselves that we ever had anything to do with it. Note, these disciples were waiting “for the promise,” and I will show you where

they were waiting—12th verse, "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet" (where Christ parted company from them), "and when they were come, they went into an upper room" with His brethren. That is where these waiting disciples are housed; the Lord has gone up, but the Holy Ghost was not yet given. We read in 2nd Acts—"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Oh, beloved, see what is necessary to accredit this Church as the new vessel of testimony from God to the world. I have shown you Christ in his death—in resurrection—in ascension—and now these disciples waiting in the upper room for something further—the descent of the Holy Ghost. The death of Christ did not suffice to form the Church—nor the ascension, nor the resurrection. On the descent of the Holy Ghost, it sat upon each of these disciples, and they began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance; we take our place there as anointed with them in Christ. Believers in Christ are thus brought into union with the

Head in Heaven. Many of you do not get into this living communion with God by His word, because you read the Book of Acts as a mere history. How will you know His heart unless you know how it came out? How shall I know the Lord's sympathy, for example, except I go to the grave of Lazarus, and put *myself* into that wonderful scene, “Jesus wept?” He is at the depth of all our sufferings, that He may be perfect in His sympathies. When you read the Word of God, put yourself in the place of the woman in the 4th of John, and don't come out of it until you hear Him say to *you*, “I that speak unto *thee* am *He*.” But, let me return to the Acts. I was speaking to you about this company of men who were seized and claimed by the Father for Christ. The Holy Ghost sat upon them, as the power by which the twos and threes were to be baptised into “one body”—I say nothing now of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

When Christ was upon earth, there was only one Person on whom the Holy Ghost could dwell. Look at that dove hovering until it rests upon the head of the Blessed One. There was one man upon earth whom God had sealed for Himself, but Christ says, “That will not satisfy me—I cannot abide *alone!*”

I pass on to notice the verses in the end of the 2nd chapter. *Now there is a Church*, for you see the “Lord *adding* to it,” and Christ is ascended as the Head,

although the doctrine does not come out here. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul," &c. (Acts iv., verse 32, to the end). You will observe there was also an *outward* expression of that union, formed in life by the Holy Ghost, resting upon the members. What was the outward expression? Why, there was not a dissentient voice among them, and so unselfish, that, when they saw a want, it was the delight of their hearts to meet that want. It is no wonder that you find in the 33rd verse, those two things connected, power and grace. "With *great power* gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and *great grace* was upon them all." They go together. "And to every one of *us* is given *grace*, according to the measure of the gift of Christ," &c. Well, I pass on, beloved, to Peter's vision of the sheet in the 10th chapter of the Acts, 9th to 17th verse. This was the way that God instructed Peter when the door was to be opened to the Gentiles. In the early part of the Acts, the many thousands were still in Jerusalem; but this sheet was let down to show that God was going to cleanse, not only Jews, but sinners of the Gentiles. In this narrative Cornelius and a number of Gentiles are converted by the preaching of Peter, and the Holy Ghost rests upon them; and if you turn to the 11th chapter, you will find he rehearses this in the 15th verse, "And as I began to speak, the

Holy Ghost fell upon *them*, as on *us* at the beginning." So that you get *two* companies—the Gentiles, and *us* at the beginning—with the Holy Ghost on each. You find this was in *Cesarea*, eight years after. But it is not *unity*; and, observe, Peter cannot make them one body, but says to the Apostles, "Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ: what was I, that I could withstand *God*." Still, the Apostles did not know what to do with them; or how to acknowledge them! Nevertheless, James and those at Jerusalem, when they heard that Peter had gone down to the Gentiles, and that God had given them the Holy Ghost—said God had granted "unto the Gentiles repentance *unto life*."

Let me come on to another point, in the 26th chapter. To introduce Paul (13th to the 16th verse), I want you to see this, that Peter's lesson about the sheet was only sufficient for Peter. He went to the Gentiles as instructed, and God owned him; but you get the Lord, after the martyrdom of Stephen, saying, so to speak, "I can now take the whole thing into my hands, and gather them to *myself* where I am!" Stephen does not talk about the Lord's *return*, like Peter; he has nothing to say to the nation about His return. It is all over with them now as a people; and Stephen becomes the first martyr of *the Church*,

and goes to *Christ!* The Lord consequently gives another commission to Paul. There is no sheet here at all; He shows *Himself* to Paul, and brings the chief of sinners upon earth to the *Son of Man in glory* in the Heavens. Paul goes out with a new testimony, not about the sheet; for in the Christ that *he* knows, there is neither Jew nor Greek, but "Christ is all and in all." Now, observe, the Lord is unfettered, and can gather to His own Person, just as *He is!* for the governmental actings of Jehovah with Israel are over for a time. Having said this much, I pass on to the 2nd chapter of Ephesians, 11th to the 14th verse, where Paul says, I can tell you what to do with the *two* companies. 'In Christ Jesus there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision; therefore, God can make of twain *one* new man in the glorified Christ, who appeared to Saul on his way to Damascus. I have got a ministry by which they are made both *one*, and 'both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.'" Blessed it was to see, when Christ was upon *earth*, the "two or three gathered in His name." It was in *His* name; but what have you and I been tracing? His Lordship, His Headship, &c. Gentiles being let in, Paul goes out and says, I can now lead them into the final blessing, because "in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew" (Coll. ii, 11), and, moreover, henceforth we know no man, nor even Christ after the flesh; and

that is where Paul began. All he knew afterwards was "a man in Christ, and an end of man in the flesh below."

Now, do you understand the difference between Peter's *sight* and Paul's *sight* of the Jesus he was persecuting? The man I see up there in the glory—there is neither Jew nor Greek *in Him*; but is that enough? No. For ever after, Christianity does not recognise such a person, as man in the flesh; it has been crucified with Christ—and knows nothing but a glorified Christ in the Heavens, and "a man in Christ" (dead and risen). That is enough! I wish now to refer to unity. The 16th of Matthew was the foundation-stone; the 18th of Matthew, two or three gathered to the name of Jesus; but Paul's ministry is the only ministry where "the unity of the Spirit" comes in. Peter never talks of the unity of the Spirit, or of the one body. Paul got a *new* commission from the Lord in glory, and says, "I have received of the Lord:" the *Lord* speaks to him. Till He comes, endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and love. I turn back, for this purpose, to Peter's question in the 18th Matthew, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto you, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." It is a solemn thing, beloved, and I wish you to feel it

so—that being brought up to these wonderful realities—this one body and this one Spirit—to remember how, and in what way, we are to be occupied in carrying it out. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." That is the denial of self, but now I get a further thing. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in *the bond of peace*," "forbearing one another in love;" and I turn with you to the 18th Matthew to see what love is. I don't know anything more important. Brotherly kindness is not charity. The difference, if you remember, is stated in the I. Cor. xiii., "If I give my body to be burned, and have *not* charity." Why, is *not that* charity? No. Now, I ask you, what do you think charity is? I am sure we should say, "Giving all my goods to feed the poor." No; that is not charity, for that is short of sacrificing yourself. Suppose I give my body to be burned? No. That is not charity. I look at charity in Christ, and see it nowhere else. He gives up all, but that brought him to poverty. Charity was this, *that He put Himself in our place, and is coming to take us to be with Him where He is, and to be like Him for ever!* This is charity. As to forgiveness—and "forbearing one another in love," remember this, we have life (as in John xvii.), and we must not now talk about the selfishness of the old nature, except to judge it. I am going

to speak to you about the new. Charity belongs to the new nature, maintained in us by the Holy Ghost. I have seen it in Christ. Could death stop it? No. Paul had the sentence of death upon his flesh. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." I see him pass on, and led about in triumph by God. As regards mankind: Satan comes in and says, "I must draw the blind down, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Just one thing more about Paul: when he gives to us an account of his exposure to sufferings, look at this life in him—"In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea." No matter what, rough or smooth, I take pleasure in infirmities. I want them; they are my pleasure, as well as my profit, "that the power of Christ may rest upon me;" and the Lord says, if my power is to rest upon you, you must be weak! "Very well," Paul says, "when I am weak, then am I strong." What a lesson this is as to charity! As to forgiveness—look at Peter's idea of charity, "until seven times." His was a wonderful measure, which would put some of us into a corner. True charity is, "until seventy times seven!" This is charity as we have known it in Christ—don't look at

yourself. If you dwell on yourself, you will be ruined; if you look at Christ, you will see everything in His light—and accept no lower rule than this—"as He is, so are you in *this* world."

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