

CHAPTER II.

THE SON - MORE THAN THE PROPHETS.

- 1. I. God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners,*
- 2. Hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son.*

WE all know that there are two Testaments – the Old and the New. These represent two dispensations, two modes of worship, two sorts of religions, two ways in which God has intercourse with man, and man draws nigh to God. The one was provisional, preparatory, and intended to pass away. What it gave and wrought was not meant to satisfy, but only to awaken the expectation of something better that was to come. The other was the fulfillment of what had been promised, and destined to last for ever, because it was itself a complete revelation of an everlasting redemption, of a salvation in the power of an endless life.

In both Old and New Testament it was God who spake. The prophets in the Old, and the Son in the New, were equally God's messengers. God spake in the prophets no less truly than in the Son. But in the Old everything was external and through the mediation of men. God Himself could not yet enter and take possession of man and dwell in him. In the New all is more directly and immediately divine – in an inward power and reality and life, of which the Old had only the shadow and hope. The Son, who is God, brings us into the very presence of God.

And wherefore was it that God did not, could not, from the very beginning, reveal Himself in the Son? What need was there of these two ways of worshipping and serving Him? The answer is twofold – If man were indeed intelligently and voluntarily to appropriate God’s love and redemption, he needed to be prepared for it. He needed first of all to know his own utter impotence and hopeless wretchedness. And so his heart had to be wakened up in true desire and expectancy to welcome and value what God had to give.

When God speaks to us in Christ it is as the Father dwelling in the Son. “The words that I say unto you, I speak not from Myself, but the Father abideth in Me doeth the works.” Just as God’s speaking in Christ was an inward thing. So God can still speak to us in no other way. The external words of Christ, just like the words of the prophets, are to prepare us for, and point us to, that inner speaking in the heart by the Holy Spirit, which alone is life and power. This is God’s true speaking in His Son.

It is of the utmost consequence for our spiritual life that we should rightly understand these two stages in God’s dealing with man. In two ways, not in one; not in more than two; in two ways has God spoken.

They indicate what, in substance, is God’s way with every Christian. (“The characteristics which before marked the revelation itself, now mark the human apprehension of the final revelation.” – WESTCOTT.) There is, after his conversion, a time of preparation and testing, to see whether he willingly and heartily sacrifices all for the full blessing. If in this stage he perseveres in earnest effort and striving, he will be brought to learn the two lessons the Old Testament was meant to teach, He will become more deeply conscious of his own impotence, and

the strong desire will be awakened after a better life, to be found in the full revelation of Christ as able to save completely. When these two lessons are learned – the lesson of despair of self and hope in God alone – the soul is prepared, if it will yield itself in faith to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to enter truly into the New Testament life within the veil, in the very Holiest of All, as it is set forth in this Epistle.

Where Christians, through defective instruction, or through neglect and sloth, do not understand God's way for leading them on unto perfection, the Christian life will always remain full of feebleness and failure. It was thus with the Hebrew Christians. They belonged to the New Testament, but their life was anything but the exhibition of the power and joy Christ came to reveal. They were far behind what many of the Old Testament saints had been; and the reason was this – they knew not the heavenly character of the redemption Christ had brought. They knew not the heavenly place in which He ministers, nor the heavenly blessing He dispenses, nor the heavenly power in which He secures our enjoyment of these blessings. They knew not the difference between the prophets and the Son; what it means that God has now spoken to us in His Son. The one object of the Epistle is to set before us the heavenly priesthood of Christ and the heavenly life to which He in His divine power gives us access. It is this gives the Epistle its inestimable value for all time, that it teaches us the way out of the elementary stage of the Christian life to that of full and perfect access to God.

Let us grasp and hold firmly the difference between the two stages. In the one, the action of man is more prominent: God speaks in the prophets. In the other, the divine presence and power are more fully revealed: God speaks

in the Son, who bears and brings the very life of God, and brings us into living contact with God Himself. In the one, it is the human words that occupy and influence and help us to seek God; in the other, the divine indwelling Word reveals its power within. In the one, it is multiplicity of thoughts and truths, of ordinances and efforts; in the other, the simplicity and the unity of the one Son of God, and faith in Him alone.

How many have sought by study and meditation and acceptance of the words of the Bible to find God, and yet have failed. They knew not that these were but the finger-posts pointing to the living Son, – words coming indeed from God, most needful and profitable, and yet not sufficient; only yielding us their true blessing when they have brought us to hear God Himself speaking in His Son.

1. Let none of us rest content with the lower stage. Let us see that personal fellowship with God, through the Holy Spirit, is what Christ gives. God calls us to it: Christ lives in heaven to work it, through the Spirit He gives from heaven.

2. One may know much of the Bible and the words of God, and yet remain feeble. What one needs is to know the living Word, in whom God speaks within, in life and power.

3. All the prophets point to the Son, as the true Prophet. Let us take them very definitely as our teachers, to reveal God in us.

4. When I speak a word, I desire all its meaning and force to enter into him whom I address. God has in these last days but one Word. He desires to have all that Word is and means enter in and live in us. Let us open our hearts, and God will speak into it that one Word, This is My Son, in such a way that He will indeed be all our own.