

Behold

This scriptural word is often found at the beginning of a phrase, and is thus designed to arrest the attention: Behold! Immediately one is compelled to leave off the present occupation and turn aside to consider something of great importance. The word means to stop and take notice; to examine in a detailed way; to focus the attention of the beholder. Spiritually speaking, it is to be arrested by a sight, a word, a truth, or a Person so important, so Wonderful, that it, or He of necessity demands our full attention: for here is something to be viewed or heard which, under the revelatory work of God the Holy Spirit, will be life-changing.

It is well known that William Tyndale loved the richness of our language, and often used a variety of English words to translate one Greek word; so he sometimes rendered this word 'Lo' – hence the phrase, still used by the world, 'Lo and behold!' – and 'see', most notably in Acts 8:36: 'See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?' The same word in a slightly different form is also found in the words of the woman of Samaria, 'Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?' and in the Greeks', 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'

Yet there is a beholding but not seeing: Pilate cried, 'Behold the man', but neither the Jews nor he saw anything, for as the Lord Jesus had said to Nicodemus, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see'.

More often than not, then, we are called to 'behold' the Person of the Lord Jesus. Indeed, both the first use of this word in the New Testament and the last, relate to the comings of the Saviour: 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us', Matt. 1:23; 'And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last', Rev. 22:12,13.

Behold, then, the great mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh. Mary's son was named Emmanuel – God with us. Could there be a clearer testimony as to the nature of the Person of Jesus of Nazareth?

Here is a divine Person found as a man. Jesus Christ is one who has 'come in the flesh'. If he is said to have 'come' then before he partook of flesh and blood he must have already existed in his Person. One can only come into time – the realm of the flesh – from eternity, for there is no other realm of existence. Again we read that 'God sent forth his Son', Gal. 4:4; one can only 'send' something which already exists; therefore he was the Son before he was sent – Son from all eternity.

Moreover, if Jesus had not taken upon him flesh and blood – become a man – he could not have died: could not have destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: could not have delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, Heb. 2.

But reading these truths on the page and believing them with the natural intellect is not to 'behold' savingly. One has to be shown his natural unbelief regarding the Person of Christ before he will be in a position to seek that saving revelation of him. Flesh and blood cannot attain to saving knowledge of Christ; the Father must reveal him. Many 'believed' in Jesus because of the miracles which he did, or because of his teachings, but when he said, 'Before Abraham was, I am', their 'belief' took up stones to cast at him, John 8.

This is the great deception many people are under in the churches and chapels. They say they 'believe in Jesus', but he has never been revealed to them. Others say they 'would see Jesus', but when he replies with the way of the cross – as he did to the original seekers – they soon shrink away, John 12:20-41. Many 'love Jesus', call him Lord and 'worship' him, but never do the things which he says; therefore their love and worship is false, Luke 6:46-49.

I speak from experience. I was brought up to believe in Jesus: that he was the Son of God; that he was God. But when he came and spoke those words into my heart, 'I that speak unto thee am he', John 4:26, I immediately rose up in (hitherto unrealised) unbelief with these fearful words gushing out of my mouth – from my heart – 'Well, what an arrogant thing to say! Who does he think he is!' This revelation of unbelief in the heart is vital if we are ever to be brought to saving faith.

But how often have we heard 'Christians' say, 'I've *always* believed in Jesus!' They never have.

Behold, Emmanuel, God with us. He is Jehovah. He is Jeremiah's, 'Jehovah our righteousness', Jer. 23:5,6. Those who come to your door supposedly 'witnessing' for Jehovah say that this prophesy does not prove that Jesus' Name is the same as his Person! Yes, he is here called 'Jehovah', but he is not Jehovah. And why do they betray such blindness? Because they have never 'beheld' him.

They told me recently that Jehovah is the only Saviour; and they were right. But when I told them that 'thou shalt call his name Jesus, for *he* shall save his people from their sins' – that Jesus himself being the Saviour was therefore Jehovah – they just replied that Jesus was not Jehovah. I said that David called Jehovah his 'shepherd', Psalm 23:1; and that Jesus said 'I am', not 'my Father is', 'the good shepherd'; but they only repeated that Jesus was not Jehovah. Alas they think to understand 'the mystery of godliness' with finite – not to say carnal and benighted – minds. But faith is not first and foremost a case of understanding, but of believing.

Emmanuel means 'God with us'. The very Person of God is found as a man. He said, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father'. Hath *seen*. Many 'saw' Jesus of Nazareth, but few saw the Father. And until we need a Saviour; until we need God himself to come and save us; then we can 'believe in Jesus' all we like, but we will never know him savingly, and therefore all our Christianity will be in vain.

But then one day we will see him as he is: all mystery will be removed. Behold the 'Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last', coming in the clouds of heaven at the end of the world. Behold God the Son sitting on the judgment seat commanding the gathering together before him of all who have ever lived to be judged according to their works. On his right hand will stand those known of him from all eternity who were given in time to 'behold' him: they in whom it pleased God to reveal his Son; and then see all the others on the left side: among whom will be the religious, the irreligious, the avowed heathen and the professing but unbelieving 'Christians', who never 'beheld' him at all – although many of them were told in this life that

their natural belief should not be mistaken for real faith; that their natural willingness to 'take Jesus at his word' was not proof that he had been revealed savingly to them; no, they were simple believers, sincere Christians, enthusiastic followers; but they never knew him, having never beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Why had they never seen him? Because they never really needed to see him as such. The truth written on the page, easily accepted, was good enough for them.

But now they see him in all his glorious majesty; in all his awful holiness. No, they had never seen or perceived him in this manner before. They may have had the *Credo*; they may have learned the doctrine of the Son from their Confessions, Articles, or Catechising classes, they may often have sung sentimentally about him in their worship songs, but they remained ignorant of his very Person *because they were never brought to feel their need of a Saviour who was God himself*. No, their 'belief' was good enough; was mistaken for real salvation. But now they are on the left hand side.

He has warned you. Think. Think. Consider. Don't dismiss the thought that this could never apply to you, though you sit in a pew or stand in a pulpit on a Sunday. Entertain seriously the distinct possibility that these words of the Saviour could include you: 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Those are the words of the Jesus you say you believe in. Do you believe he is telling the truth when he says them? Do you think he *could* be referring to you?

When the Saviour started to speak into my heart, first those words from John 4 quoted above and then these words from Matthew 7:21, I reeled in my unbelief; but by the grace of God I began to seek true saving faith – however it was to be brought about, I knew not. How could I have 'believed in Jesus' all those years but still be ignorant of him in rabid unbelief all along! What about the forgiveness of all my sins which I 'knew' until then, if I had no real faith in the Saviour! What about all my scriptural knowledge, and my comforting underlining of all those lovely texts in my Bible! What about my prayers – what about all those *answers* to my prayers! What about all that peace, joy and liberty I often felt when reading, studying and

meditating on the Word! All nothing? All false? All a delusion? But I was Andrew Dibble! I was someone! I was special – in my own eyes! Surely God loved me! Surely Jesus had died for me! Surely the Spirit dwelt in me! Surely I ‘saw’ and could never be deluded! After all, I loved the Bible! I was serious-minded! I *believed!*

But I had never ‘beheld’; cp. John 9:39-41.

What I needed, and what is needed by all in that state, was to be brought to a position where I heard the ‘behold’ of John the Baptist; for without this ‘behold’ in the fulness of its application, we must surely perish: ‘The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world... 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! And the two disciple heard him speak, and they followed Jesus’, John 1:29,35-37.

Notice in this passage how that it was only the ‘disciples’ of John who rightly beheld the Lamb of God, causing them to follow him. The priests and the Levites came out from Jerusalem, questioned, and presumably went back again. But the next day John spoke to those who were constantly with him: ‘Behold, the Lamb of God.’ And then ‘again, the next day’ he repeated his assertion, ‘and they followed Jesus.’

So who were these disciples? They were those who had been baptised of John with the baptism of repentance. They had gone to him in the wilderness of the spiritual barrenness they had felt inside – though the outwardly professing people of God. They had heard the voice of John crying in that wilderness, telling them that their lives were as grass and all their achievements were like the flower of grass – perishing quickly. They worshipped the God of their fathers in sacrifices, feasts, and ordinances: they saw outward sins being washed away with the blood of bulls and of goats; but they had a decaying and constantly changing priesthood; they were under a law which could only highlight sin and condemn their souls; and although they had the scriptures – the scrolls – they were also under a growing number of newly-brought-in traditions which emanated from men and not from God, nor even from Moses. But, of course, but none of these things satisfied their obvious

desire for something deeper, something inward, something spiritual. Outward, formal, 'letter' religion proved deficient for those who longed to know God himself.

So they had been compelled to go and hear John. Yes, here are people fleeing forms of religion to hear a voice crying not in Jerusalem, but in the wilderness. God was visiting his people; but it wasn't in the temple or synagogue; it wasn't through priests, Pharisees or the doctors of the law; no, it was away from all these things, to one raised up of God to preach his word in the power of the Spirit. And those who were ordained to hear went out seeking for and finding repentance: repentance toward God. John preached repentance – a turning from all things to do with the old covenant – and they had turned. But repentance toward God was not enough; they also needed 'faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' And when he appeared – Oh, wonder of wonders! – John pointed these disciples of his to 'the Lamb of God', and they followed him.

And as they followed, Jesus began to teach them. He spent the next three years answered their question, 'Where dwellest thou?' by showing them that he dwelt in the will of his Father. He taught them of his Person; of their unbelief; and of the impossibility of them being able to save themselves. He revealed the Father to them, and the Father began to reveal his Son in them. He opened to them the mysteries of the kingdom; and of the sovereignty of the Father in salvation. He taught them about sin, and about sins; about the flesh and the Spirit. He revealed to them the true nature of the law, and what the gospel was. He taught them about faith over-against works; and of who the true seed of Abraham was. He showed them what light was, and darkness; what seeing was, and who the blind were; he impressed upon them how that revelation from heaven was vital to dispel ignorance and presumption. He revealed to them that the devil, as well as God, had children; and he showed them what true obedience was.

He introduced them to the fact that he had a church, and that he – and not men – would build it. He taught them of 'this life', and of 'eternal life'. He confirmed to them that all the 'old testament' scriptures were true and trustworthy – quoting from them constantly. He validated all the words of all the prophets concerning himself; that Christ should

come; that he should die for the sins of his people; that he should lie in the tomb three days and three nights, and that he should rise again. He taught them of his ascending to the Father, and of his sending the Spirit. He confirmed the reality of the coming of the 'end of the world', of his coming again, of 'the judgement', of the everlasting blessedness of his sheep, and the eternal torment of the goats – many of whom professed his name.

And they were, at length, brought to 'faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ', even to 'the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ', being indwelt of the Spirit who proceeded from both the Father and the Son. The revelation of the mystery was shown to them: 'that the Gentiles – the *Gentiles*?! yes, that even the Gentiles – should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel'. What 'unsearchable riches in Christ' these are! And some of them were given to preach them, and to see the truth of them appear before their very eyes.

And we will see, know, experience, rejoice in, *none* of these things until we 'behold the Lamb of God' ourselves. Do we have a sinful nature which needs taking away? – many don't seem to think they have. Does that nature bring forth actual sins that need bearing away, or do we live in a constant state of self-justification? Do we feel our natural enmity toward God and his truth as these things are proclaimed? Is it true that we really do love the darkness of our first-born nature rather than the light of the truth of the gospel of Christ, because our deeds are evil? Then we must be brought to 'Behold the man.'

Behold him dying on the cross in the place of sinners. Behold him being made sin for us who knew no sin. Behold him bearing our sins in his own body on the tree. Behold the Lamb which God sacrificed for his people. Behold the LORD laying upon him the iniquity of us all. Behold him dying the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Behold him bringing the dispensation of law to a close; 'taking it away', being its 'end', fulfilling it and, not by the law but by faith, bringing in justifying righteousness solely by the shedding of his blood.

And then, behold the tomb; if one sin has remained unpunished, if sin has not been completely put away, then the stone must for ever remain

in its place. But, behold, the stone has been rolled away! The tomb is empty! He is not there, he is risen! Then sin *is* put away; all the sins of his people *have been* borne away; his blood was sufficient, his broken body enough, his dying satisfactory to accomplish and finish the work; and now he is risen, and they are risen in him, and they live beyond death, beyond the grave!

The law has sounded its curse, condemnation and judgments: Guilty. Sin has paid its wages: Death. But he and they have met and passed through those judgments and that death, and live on the other side! Therefore sin no longer has dominion over them; the law can speak nothing more to them; all things are now new: a new man has appeared; a new body is risen; a new and everlasting covenant has been established, replacing the old – which has been for ever put away! God's people – those who 'behold' these things – have passed from death unto life by the blood of the Lamb; have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son; from the oldness of the letter into a new and living way in the Spirit. They had been the servants of sin; but now they have obeyed from the heart this doctrine of Christ. They were the children of wrath, even as others; but now they are manifest as the Sons of God – 'and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is', 1 John 3:2, etc.

To 'behold', then, is to be led by the Spirit into all these things in experience and by faith. The flesh profiteth nothing. Fleshly religion profiteth nothing. Man's religion profiteth nothing. *Religion* profiteth nothing! Only beholding Jesus Christ by revelation profiteth unto eternal life. Seek it with all your heart, or perish at last.