Matthew - Commentaries by George Cutting

Incidents and Illustrations of the Gospel: Sought and Brought, Voice., A

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A VOICE from the dwellings of men. “In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning” (Matt. 2:18).

What did it mean? It was all the result of human wickedness, man’s determined will. King Herod could be plausible and polite enough, and if he could only have accomplished his ends that way he would no doubt have been satisfied, but when milder means were unsuccessful he could be cruel down to death. The destruction of only one Child was what Herod’s heart was really set upon, but a whole district must be robbed of its tender nurslings rather than his wicked will be frustrated. What odds who suffers so that I get my way? Such is man: for Herod was only a sample of the race. God looks at man’s heart and says, “There is no difference; all have sinned.” “They have all gone out of the way.”

What can a holy, righteous God do with such a creature? Listen. There is another voice. It is a voice from the wilderness. It is not the voice of lamentation, but of one who plainly calls for it, and pointedly shows the necessity of it. He points men to their histories. He announces the approach of the coming King. He calls to repentance. It is the voice of one crying in the wilderness and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 3:2, 3). He shows that wickedness would then be swept out of the land in burning judgment, and all iniquity stop her mouth. Repent, repent, he thunders forth, REPENT. SIN MUST BE JUDGED.

Then there is, so to speak, a short pause in the Baptist’s rousing mission, and in that pause another voice is heard: not from Rama nor from the wilderness this time. It is a voice from heaven. Suddenly we find ourselves in the company of divine Persons, and we may well tread softly and listen here with bated breath, for the voice of God the Father is heard.

Man is once more the subject, but it is a new order of man, entirely, that comes before us. In Him all the moral excellencies and perfections of the blessed God find their true expression. Yet He is as veritably “a partaker of flesh and blood,” as truly human, apart from sin, as any of the ruined race He has come to serve.

Listen, then, while God the Father bears His own testimony to this heavenly Stranger. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” or as it is sometimes rendered, “in whom I have found My delight” (Matt. 3:16,17).

No weeping over the cruel havoc of human wickedness is heard here: no room for a call to repentance. The attention of heaven and earth is drawn to a Man who is, to the Father’s eye, “altogether lovely,” and to His heart a very wellspring of delight. “‘Tis Jesus, ‘tis Jesus!”

A few more steps forward and we are once more called to pause and listen. Another voice is heard—a voice from the place of judgment—a “loud voice.” It is the Son Himself who speaks this time, and He in the place of judgment. Whose judgment? God’s judgment! How amazing that He in whom was found all that God could wish for in man should be found under the overwhelming judgment of God, and that from His blessed lips should come the bitter cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46). The Son of Man is “lifted up” by man, yet brought down to the very dust of death by the judgment of God! Why? SIN MUST BE JUDGED. God’s holiness is too great to pass sin by without judging it, but His love too great to pass the sinner by without putting blessing within his reach. And the blessed Lord Jesus came down from heaven engaged to bear that judgment and express that love. What a mission! Well may the heavens be opened to honor Him, well may the lips of every saved sinner be opened to praise His blessed name!

But the picture would hardly be complete without reference to the Saviour’s voice from another position—a voice from the throne of God.

A mad persecutor, in his blind zeal, as determined if not as cruel as Herod himself, as self-satisfied as the most scrupulous Pharisee in Jerusalem, is stopped on his way to Damascus. The voice of mercy arrests him—the voice of the exalted Jesus; the grace of Jesus wins him, the power of Jesus completely changes his entire course, and the chief persecutor of the saints becomes their chief comforter. The chief of sinners is made gladly willing to take the place of “less than the least of all saints.” He who once dragged them off to prison, and persecuted them to death, because they were the followers of Jesus, is now ready to serve them to death, and if, for Christ’s sake, he spends the end of his days in prison-chains, he will not slacken his service even then.

Oh, what wonders can the voice of Jesus accomplish! Have you yet heard that voice, my reader? Listen, then. It is addressing you today. In His name repentance and remission of sins is still being preached. What are you doing with this message? You are not asked to wait for some redeeming merit ere you respond to His call, but simply and heartily to condemn the evil you find in yourself, and trust the good that is in Him; in other words, to “repent and believe the gospel.” But we earnestly warn you that that voice will not always call you to blessing. Refuse the blessing a little longer, and the same voice will call you to judgment. What must it be, think you, to hear the voice of a rejected and oft-insulted Saviour saying, “DEPART FROM ME”?

May such a lot never be yours!