



Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 27

The Lord Hath Spoken

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 27th September, 1987**

Text: *“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken” (Isaiah 1. 2).*

Isaiah's prophecy has always been very precious to the people of God. Now here we have the very first words that he utters in his prophecy – if you will, the beginning of it, the preface to it. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” What is the meaning of it? Why does he begin by calling even the heavens to hear, even the earth to hear? Why? Because he was overwhelmed with amazement that this great, almighty, holy, sovereign Lord God should ever condescend to speak to ruined sinners. Now that is the point of it. Mind you, in the immediate context his sense of amazement is that the Lord should deal so graciously with His people as His beloved children by adoption and grace and yet their dreadful rebellion against Him. This amazing thing, sins against light and knowledge, sins against love and blood. Now in the immediate context that is the way he speaks it, and yet in a general sense this complete amazement, this complete wonder, that an almighty, sovereign, holy God should ever condescend to speak. Why, he calls the whole of creation to stand amazed at this mighty act of God.

Of course, God did speak in creation. That was a display of His omnipotence, a display of His sovereignty, because in creation He chose to reveal Himself in His almighty works. Creation with God was an easy thing. “He spake and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” – the divine display of omnipotence.

Also, the Lord God almighty spoke to Adam in Eden before the Fall. He spoke to him in the cool of the day. He held sweet communion with His unfallen creature. It must have been a wonderful thing for our first parents, unfallen, with sacred delight to listen to the voice of their God. But solemnly man sinned, man fell. “Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Now this is it: “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken” to this wretched, vile, sinful creature who has rebelled against

Him, dishonoured His law, broken the covenant of works. Have you ever stood in wonder and amazement and admiration in the Garden of Eden considering the riches of God's grace, that in one moment He did not destroy the whole of His creation, that in one moment He did not cut Adam and Eve off for ever? Of course, we now look back and know the reason for it, that there were purposes of love and mercy to be fulfilled, that there was a covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure, that was not even shaken by the Fall; and yet we still stand amazed at the wonderful mercy, the riches of God's grace, that when man had fallen, marred his fair image, dishonoured his Maker, disobeyed Him, that still the Lord should have dealings with His creature, His creature now as fallen, and that those dealings should be dealings of mercy. O may there ever be that sense of wonder and amazement that God should ever condescend to speak to sinful man after the Fall.

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” Now you remember that first word that He spoke. It was this, it was a solemn word: “Adam, where art thou?” The awful solemnity of it as man sought to flee from his Maker, as man clothed himself with fig leaves, as man began to make excuses, to put the blame on another, to put the blame on the serpent. And yet you see, this solemn word, “Where art thou?” which found them out, which probed their conscience, which found them in their ruined condition, was a word of love and mercy, for the Lord was not going to leave them in that dreadful state of enmity and alienation from God.

O but, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,” when the Lord condescends to speak that first promise, the promise of Messiah, the promise of a Saviour: the seed of the woman shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel. O what did that promise mean to the Old Testament church? They were daily conscious of sin and daily conscious of the effect of sin, the “thorns also,” the briars and the thistles, the hard labour, the sweat of the brow. And yet still God has spoken and when the Lord speaks, then it is for ever. He does not speak and then change His mind. He does not speak and then withdraw His promise. That is a good word (isn't it?) a good word in this context and a good word for faith to hang on: “Hath He said, and shall He not also do it?” The faithful God!

“His every word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises.”

The Lord has spoken, and spoken that first promise of Messiah, the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent’s head. Now may there in your religion and mine ever be that sense of wonder, that sense of admiration, that God has ever spoken. I believe in real religion there always will be that sense of amazement, that sense of wonder, that God should ever condescend to deal so mercifully, so graciously, with lost and fallen sinners.

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” And He continued to speak, didn’t He? The Lord spoke many wonderful gospel words through the ceremonial law. Really, the ceremonial law was the gospel of the Old Testament church and in it “the Lord hath spoken” – spoken indeed of man’s great need as a sinner, but spoken of a substitute, a sacrifice, a lamb slain, blood shed, atonement made, forgiveness given. I know these things were “through a glass darkly,” they were “shadows of good things to come.” But O the wonder of it! And didn’t it mean so much to those faithful Israelites of old when they saw the lamb slain and the blood shed? And we believe that many of them by faith looked forward to Calvary. “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad.” How many a faithful son and daughter of Abraham also saw the day of Christ as they heard His voice through the types and shadows of the ceremonial law! And didn’t some of them rejoice in it and stand in wonder and amazement at it?

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken” some of those wonderful prophecies that were made, and through this prophet Isaiah some of the most wonderful. Why, as the Lord speaks throughout this blessed prophecy, you can write these words across many a passage there. You can call heaven and earth to witness in wonder and amazement that God should ever have spoken such words as this. Matthew Henry began his comments on Isaiah rather quaintly. It is such a solemn beginning, he says, but “Isaiah will have some much better things than this to say if you read on.” O but some of these wonderful things! “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is

accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." O but look at that wonderful Isaiah 53, what the Lord has spoken concerning the sufferings of Christ, and that wonderful Isaiah 63, what the Lord has spoken of the exaltation of Christ, and then those words in that rich cluster of chapters following chapter 40. I mean things like this: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," that the Lord should ever say to a sinner, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." O the wonderful comfort and consolation, that the Lord should speak an amazing word like this: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness."

But you see, you do not have to go right towards the end of Isaiah (do you?) to stand in wonder and in amazement? Why, even in this chapter – for the most part it is a terrible chapter: "Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." It is a terrible chapter. There are some frightening words, frightening because of their truth. And many would think that the Lord would say, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" You would think that the Lord would say, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." But He does not. "Give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." When we read through Isaiah and the other prophecies, may it ever be with that sense of wonder and amazement that ever a holy, sovereign, almighty God should condescend to speak such beautiful words to sinners.

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken." But you see, the great climax of it all is this: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." You see, Christ is the final revelation. Christ is God's final word. And it is not so much here just the words that the Lord Jesus Himself spoke – though never man spake like Him, those blessed, gracious words – but it is more this, that the eternal God has spoken through His Son, the revelation through His Son.

That is why the Lord Jesus is spoke of as the Word. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” You see the One through whom the Father speaks. By our words we make ourselves known. By our words we reveal what we are thinking. And Christ is the eternal Word and He became the incarnate Word, and His dear Father reveals Himself, speaks to sinners through Him. O what a voice, that voice of God speaking through His dear Son, that voice of love and mercy, especially that voice that speaks from Calvary, that speaks from the cross, that voice of His precious blood and that voice which now for ever speaks for His people in heaven, “the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Then, “hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,” that ever the Lord in love and mercy should speak through the death of His own, dearly-beloved Son.

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” Now have you ever heard His voice? He has spoken, but have you ever heard His voice? And some things that He has spoken are exceedingly solemn, and O how we need to stand amazed with wonder and to tremble at this! When He says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” When He says, “The wages of sin is death.” When He says, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” When He says, “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.” Now, “hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” And you see, not only is there a sense of wonder and admiration that the prophet calls on the heavens and earth to hear, but that fallen, lost, ruined man refuses to hear. God speaks these solemn, awful warnings and His sinful creatures stop up their ears and they refuse to hear. And so he calls the heaven itself to hear and the earth itself to hear and to witness in amazement the hardness and impenitence of fallen man.

Beloved friends, it will be a solemn thing if you and I live and die without hearing the voice of God. Now have you ever heard it, because one day you will? Every one of us here one day will hear the voice of God, and that voice from the judgment seat will either say to us, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” or it will say, “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” But we shall each

hear His voice. It is a solemn thing if we die and we have never heard His voice here on earth.

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” That is why the sinner is without excuse, because the Lord hath spoken. And then there are some of those wonderful things that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ spoke. O and if you hear His voice, then it will fill you with amazement and wonder.

Now how can we venture to speak on the wonderful words that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ spoke? “For the Lord hath spoken.” Well, “Hark! the voice of love and mercy sounds aloud from Calvary!” What was it? “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.” Now, “hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken” that: “It is finished” – the covenant of grace sealed with blood, salvation complete, the precious fountain opened for sin, the ransom price paid, justice satisfied, a way opened up even to heaven itself, the Lord Jesus declaring everything accomplished that He came to do. “It is finished.” It is no wonder our hymnwriter says,

“Think how loud thy dying Lord
Cried out, ‘It is finished!’
Treasure up that sacred word,
Whole and undiminished.”

Because there is salvation in it. There is heaven in it. There is a foundation here in this precious word of Christ.

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” Now another thing. The Lord Jesus speaks to His sinful, guilty church, the whole aggregate of His chosen, and He says this: “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.” Now isn’t that sufficient to call heaven and earth to bear witness to this with amazement, to marvel at it? You think of your own guilt, and if you think of the guilt of one sinner saved by grace and then you think of the sin, the guilt, the vileness of all the Lord’s chosen from Adam’s day to the end of time, and the Lord Jesus, whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity, looks on His church and He says, “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.” Why? Because He sees her completely covered in the spotless, white robe of His

righteousness, because He sees her completely washed in His own precious, sin-atonng blood. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,” that ever the Lord Jesus should say to a guilty sinner, “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.”

This is an inexhaustible theme. You can think of all the wonderful words the Lord Jesus spoke and heaven and earth must be called to witness to the wonder of it. I mean, that poor, wretched leper who comes and the Lord has spoken, “I will; be thou clean.” And how He said to another, “Thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee.” And then those sweet invitations: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.” Really, you can go right through the whole of the life of the Lord Jesus, those wonderful words that He spoke, and you can marvel at them. It is no wonder they said, “Never man spake like this Man.”

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” And you can see just the other side of it if you creep on that holy ground in the Garden of Gethsemane, and can you believe it, to hear the Lord of life and glory speak there as He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground? “If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” Or to go into John 17 and listen to that wonderful, high-priestly prayer: “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.” “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” And perhaps some of you tonight say, “Bless His dear name that He has spoken and that He spoke such words of love and mercy as He did.”

There is another thing. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,” that the Lord still speaks. I mean enthroned in glory at God’s right hand as He exercises His unchangeable priesthood. “He ever liveth to make intercession.” Look at the whole of it: “This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost.” I gather that in the original there is some connection between that word *uttermost* and that poor woman who was bent down double. Hers was an *uttermost* case, and, “He is able to save them to the *uttermost* that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” But in a word it is this: “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” There is

the wonder, the amazement of these words that He still sits enthroned at God's right hand, that ever He could condescend to make our cause, our unworthy, wretched cause, His own, and there to plead, there to intercede, and never to lose a case. Now may there not only be a glimpse tonight that the Lord Jesus *has* spoken, but that He still *does* speak.

“For Thy people Thou art pleading;
There Thou dost their place prepare;
Ever for them interceding,
Till in glory they appear.”

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” And then, you see, this sovereign, almighty, holy God has condescended to speak in His holy Word, the Bible. May we ever be kept from taking it for granted. I remember years ago this word that I have read to you used to be spoken concerning the gift of the Bible. That is the way in which I first became familiar with this word. It used to be said, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” Why should this great God condescend to reveal Himself, to speak in a written Word, in a written Book, to sinners, those who had rebelled against Him? Why should He? But He did. The wonder of the gift of God's holy, inspired, infallible Word, and the need to call heaven and earth to witness to this amazing gift! But so often we take it for granted. We forget the wonder of it, that ever God should condescend not only to speak, but to speak in a Book, to reveal Himself in the written Word.

And you see, to me this is the simple, vital point about infallibility. People reason and argue and there are all kinds of arguments and all kinds of reasonings, but to me it is simple. If we have this amazing wonder – and we have – that God has condescended to give a Book to sinners, and if it is so amazing, so wonderful, that heaven and earth are called to bear witness to it, do you think that that great God would allow there to be any mistakes in it? Now you girls and boys, you young people, to me this is the simplest and yet the most profound way of looking at inspiration, at infallibility: not all the reasonings on this side and the arguments on that, but if we believe in God – and we do – and if He is sovereign and almighty and if He condescends to reveal Himself in a Book – and He does – then it is inconceivable that He should allow one mistake in it, however small. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” That

is why each one is without excuse, because the Lord has spoken in His holy, sacred Word.

And then we come to the promises. In His Word He has given us exceeding great and precious promises. Who can ever rightly speak of either their exceeding greatness or their exceeding preciousness? Take a promise like this: “And the blood shall be to you for a token ... and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” You think of a promise like this to one in deep trouble: “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.” Or you think of another promise like this: “Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” “What more can He say than to you He has said?” These promises, covenant promises, confirmed with an oath, sealed with the blood of Christ. It is no wonder Peter calls them “exceeding great and precious promises.” But when you look at any of them or all of them, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,” that the Lord should have ever spoken such wonderful words, such wonderful promises as these. If you could have been given an empty book and you could have written your own promises, you could not have written any better promises, anything to suit you more. Why, you dare not have ventured to suggest half of them. “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” *All your need.* “What more can He say than to you He has said?”

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” And then there are some of you here and the Lord has spoken to you personally, hasn’t He? He has spoken to you perhaps when you were in secret in your own room in prayer, or perhaps spoken to you as you were out in the street, or perhaps as you sat in your pew listening to the preaching of the gospel, or more likely than not it was when you were reading His Holy Word it was applied to your heart by the Holy Ghost, it came with power, it had a gracious effect. You may say, “How may I know that the Lord has spoken to me?” Well, if He has you will be in the spirit of this word. You will be filled with amazement and wonder. It will give you high views of God’s greatness. It will give you low views of yourself and you will stand amazed at the condescension of God that He should ever speak to such an one as you feel you are.

O but has the Lord ever spoken to you? Has His doctrine ever fallen as the rain or His speech sweetly distilled as dew in your soul? Has

He spoken to you powerfully, or more gently? Has He caused you to rest on His Word, to hang on His Word? Then you will be brought here: “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.” And it will be this: “Why me, Lord?” “Why have I found grace in Thine eyes, that Thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?” It will be, “Why me?” O but that promise will stand, that word will endure. The faithful God! “His promise is yea and amen, and never was forfeited yet.” O what a treasure, a priceless treasure you have. But it will not fill you with pride. It will humble you and you will admire the wisdom, the grace, the mercy of God that ever He should have spoken to sinners, but above all that ever He should have spoken to you. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.”