**THIRSTING FOR THE SPRINGS - SERMONS BY JOHN H. JOWETT**

**08. THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY by JOHN H. JOWETT**

*"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?"*

*John 3:11,12*

How calming and how healing is the tone of authority which sounds in these words -- "We know," "We have seen." That is the tone we like to recognise in our medical men. When the physician in our home moves about in apparent knowledge and masterhood, how it subdues the inclination to panic, how it allays the fears! It is the tone we like to find in our statesmen. It is the expression of spacious sympathy, the quiet confidence that breathes from the comprehensive mind. "We know," "We have seen." All the Master's teaching has this background of personal experience. It is a beautiful exercise to carry these words, "We know," "We have seen," right through the Gospels, and let them be sounded upon every page like an affirmatory refrain, like a grand "amen." Let us attempt the exercise with one or two of the Master's teachings. "Neither did this man sin nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Is that really so? May a man's blindness be his strength? May my infirmity be the instrument of my service? Is it possible that my very encumbrances may be marshalled for the glory of God? What is my guarantee? Just this: "We know," "We have seen." "When he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." How may I be assured of the gracious evangel? What is my guarantee? Just this: "We know," "We have seen." If we wish to know the power and value of this authoritative tone, let us remove it, and then see how the speech trembles in uncertainty and timidity. "It is highly probable that whosoever will may take the water of life freely!" Is not the hesitancy productive of chills, and is not the trembling spirit plunged into deeper dismay? "There is a strong pre-supposition that thy brother shall rise again." The very timidity of the expression would intensify our doubt. How welcome is the strong, commanding word: "We know," "We have seen."

In the reality of the Master's experience all our personal hopes and knowledge are born. My hope has birth when I hear Him say, "I know." My soul gains rest in the assurance "We have seen." If the Lord only made a grand guess, we are of all men most miserable! But He came from above. His home was in the heavenlies. He was familiar with all its resplendent estate. He shared its glory. From this abode of light He stooped to our sin-rent and sin-defiled, troubled, timid souls, and quietly said: "We know," "We have seen."

Now mark the progress of the passage. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness. If I tell you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?" Let us mark the connections of this passage with scrupulous care. You will not believe the earthly, how can ye believe the heavenly? The words appear to enshrine a condition. The condition of receiving the heavenly is the acceptance of the earthly? If I am indifferent to the one, I cannot apprehend the other. What is the earthly? Something as plain as a pike-staff! What is the heavenly? Truth, partially shrouded and veiled, lying back in the profound depths of the spirit. Let us look at the earthly. There are some things so clear that they cannot be missed. They dwell upon the plane of the earthly: they are clearly revealed and demostrated in the sphere of the earthly. Their proof is consummated in the regions of the earthly. To open the eyes is to see them! Do we believe them? I use that cardinal word, not in the sense of "opinion" or mere mental assent, I use it with the significance of "conviction," and a conviction is something that makes a "convict" of me, arresting me, and holding me down to its own determined way. In this binding sense do we "believe" the earthly? Let me give two or three examples.

The deepest peace is found in the noblest life. That is one of the earthlies. I have not mentioned God or heaven. I have mentioned a truth which is daily demonstrated on the purely earthly plane. It is an earthly fact. The peace of this city to-night dwells in the hearts of its noblest citizens. Do we believe that truth? Do we pay homage to it? Do we allow it to press down upon every part of our life, and shape and mould it? Or is the truth discarded, "rejected of men," and treated with contempt? "If ye believe not the earthly, how shall ye believe the heavenly?"

The loving eye has the finest vision. I proclaim this as an obtrusive fact in the sphere of the earthly. It receives confirmation every day. The mother has clearer eyes than the mistress. The friend has deeper insight than the foe. Love has visions where cynicism walks in the night. The art of criticism is just the art of admiration, and the truly admirable, is only discerned by the eye of love. Do we believe it? Has our assent to it become a principle, and the ruling principle of our life? "If ye believe not the earthly, how shall ye believe the heavenly?"

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." Here again is an earthly fact lying large upon the surface of common life! It is patent to everybody whose mind is even partially awake. The measure of life is not determined by the bulk of our possessions. There are many men with £2 a week, living larger lives than men with incomes vastly multiplied. Do we believe it? Is the belief shaping our plans, our purposes, our ambitions? "If ye believe not the earthly, how shall ye believe the heavenly?"

So that the crucial question is this: What is our attitude to the earthlies? Is it one of indifference, cynicism, denial or contempt? Do we pay homage to fact? Do we bow to what we know? Or are we attempting to peer into the distant while we are disloyal to that which is near? Christ declares that reverent obeisance to things revealed is the only way to the apprehension of things that are yet unrevealed. Homage to the earthly is the condition of recognising the heavenly. The Lord will not permit us to have any fruit in the prying curiosity among the heavenlies while we despise and trample upon the things that stand revealed at our very feet. He has glories upon glories to make known unto us! He will lead us into the love and purpose of the divine fatherhood, into the glories of redemption, into the marvellous ministries of the Holy Spirit, into the all-subduing outlook upon the immortal life. But we must begin by reverencing that which we know. The genuineness of our appetite will be judged by our attitude to the bread already given.

What then do you know? Do you know this: Love is the greatest thing in the world? Kneel down before the truth, and pay it reverent homage. Do you know this: Purity is sight? Bow down before it, and let it govern the common day. Do you know this: Truth is the dynamic of progress? Bend your will to it, and let it find expression in the ordinary affairs of the daily life. Go down on your knees to the earthly He has revealed, and in the midst of your reverence and obedience, the good Lord will hear your cry for light. "Light is sown for the righteous." Obeying the earthly, He will lead you into the heavenly. He will take you into the house of interpretation, and He will unveil to you some of the "things" which God hath prepared for them that love Him.