

Revelation in the Christian Life

By Paris Reidhead*

Luke, Chapter 24:13. This past week, last Lord's Day in the first instance, yesterday, the second, individuals have come to me, either directly or through someone, saying, I saw. I see. I know. For the first time I know what you mean, what you are talking about. I have heard, but now I see. Having this come this way, twice during the week, has impressed upon my heart the appropriateness of the message the Lord has laid there, and I believe no place in the Scripture more relevant to this particular theme, Revelation in the Christian Life, than the Text that I've chosen.

When I use the word revelation, you understand I am not speaking of something in addition to the Scripture. We have here a full, final, complete, unamendable, unchangeable testimony of God's will and purpose for us. No question in your mind, I am sure, as to what I mean in that. This is His Word. We so receive it, and we so accept it. When we use the word, revelation, as referring to the Christian life, have reference to this, a truth is not mine or yours, because we have heard it, because we have described it, because we can define it, or prove it. Now, hearing, remembering, defining, proving are all essential steps in Christian growth and experience, but there is this further matter set forth here, seldom understood by us, I am sure, but that is the key to growth, maturity, development in the things of the Lord. Let's go back to the Text and see why I have prefaced the message with these words.

"And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together..." (Luk. 24:13-14a).

(We will go down now to the 19th verse.)

"And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:" (Luk. 24:19).

(And then we will go over to verse 22)

"Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not" (Luk. 24:22-24).

Notice the testimony that they received. They have heard the word from the women, they have heard the word from the apostles which visited the tomb, but all of this is neutralized in their minds as far as being significant and meaningful is concerned, because it says, "But him they saw not." And I've wondered through the years of my own experience why, thinking back over past teaching, good teaching, teaching which was orthodox, sound, practical, in every way addressed to my need, why it was that teaching that I received at one time was not made mine for ten, fifteen, sometimes even twenty years, and probably tomorrow there will be truths which were learned with the intellect back years ago that have burst into life, for it is a continuing process. Why is this?

If you will excuse, and you will have to, because you are there and I am here, a personal testimony, I would like to relate something that happened so as to give a background, because this is testimony of these men, and I'll join mine to it. As a lad, I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ at a Conference, a Camp Meeting in South St. Paul, Minnesota, and the next day, after a night of joy and delight in the realization that I had been born of God, I went to see the young people's worker, Miss Julia Hibberd, a dear, gracious godly woman, had been such a blessing, such a help. But as I saw her on the grounds that morning and ran up to her and said, O Miss Hibberd, last night I was born of God, I was saved. She smiled, put her hand on my shoulder, said, Oh, I am so glad to hear that. But she said, You know, what you need is to be sanctified. And this was true, because this was our Conference testimony. And so she began to talk to me. We sat down on a bench. She explained it to me. And, of course, I was eager for everything the Lord had, everything that He gave, or wanted to give. And so she said, Do you understand, Sonny? And I said, Yes, I do. I think I do. She said, All right. Let's go into the altar. The Lord met you there last night. Let's go there. So we went back to the same altar where I had been just a few hours previously. She had explained to me. She asked me if there were any questions, If I had any problem. As far as I could understand I thought I knew what she was

talking about. And so she said, Well all right, let's pray. And then she prayed a simple prayer. And then she told me somewhat how to pray, asking the Lord to cleanse my heart and fill me with Himself, sanctify me wholly. And I prayed. And so we got up, and she said,...Well, I said, I don't feel any different. She said, That's all right. We are just trusting the Lord, taking this by faith. We walked out and we met the evangelist that had been speaking the night before. He was on his way into the morning ministry. For in the old time Camp Meetings you spoke at night and then the next morning. And then not till the following afternoon. And so she said, O Doctor, he has (and she gave my name)...He has something he wants to tell you. And so I said, Well last night at the meeting I was born of God. Oh, she said, tell him about what we have just done. O yes, and I said, then this morning we have gone in and we have prayed and I have been sanctified.

Now the point I want you to see is this, that there was revelation in the first. This had been God's dealing. For weeks, stripping, breaking, crushing, dividing, between soul and spirit, exposing, bring me to the place of bankruptcy, wakening me in the night time, proving to me I was lost, bringing to bear every kind of pressure, every kind of force, until the night before He had in this glorious, supernatural way unveiled the fact that Jesus Christ died for me, and I knew I had been born again. To me this was wonderful. I could have gone on for weeks in the delight of it, the joy of it, the exhilaration of it, and the thrill of it. I believed in sanctification. I believed that it is necessary for one, after regeneration to come to a crisis of death to self, presentation of their body, experience consciously and inwardly in a very real way the fullness of the Spirit of God. I believe that with all my heart. But the point I am trying to make out is this. She was so anxious for me to grow and to go on and develop and to become all that she knew I ought to be that she was... just could not wait for the Lord to do for me in respect to this what He had done in respect to forgiveness and regeneration. So years later, after having gone to Bible School, and into the pastorate, and then to the mission field, I came home from the mission field, utterly at the end and went, as related to some of you, to Seminary, didn't attend, but stayed for a month or more in the dormitory having a time of spiritual inventory. And this is what happened after a month of searching through the past, looking for reality, I discovered that from 1949 right back through the years of the mission field, and back through Bible School, and back to beginning pastoral experience, right down across the years, I had made the mistake of thinking that because I could diagram the doctrine, and I could define the doctrine, and could explain the doctrine, and preach the doctrine, and believe the doctrine, that I automatically could assume I had experienced it. And so I went back from '49, right on down until I came to 1932, and I assure you, dear friends, that if there had not been under all of this reality, right then I was prepared to go out into agnosticism, because I had come to the end, the utter end of myself. If there had not been something real, something that could stand the test, this is what would have happened, but when I got back to that night in the straw, there at that altar, when in brokenness, contrition and in faith I had opened my heart to Jesus Christ and had passed from death to life, I could no more deny that than deny my own existence as a person. And so I had to stop right there. What? After all of these years, 17 years, I found that I had to begin where she left me that morning. For she had taken me out of the realm of experiential reality into the realm of evangelical presumption. Do you see? And you can't build a life on evangelical presumption. Won't hold, won't stand the test, won't stand the pressure, and won't stand the force. These men had heard that Christ had been risen from the dead. They had heard that the women had seen an angel. They heard the testimony of Peter and John. But you see, they had been living in the realm of reality, and had they moved on in the basis of presumption, they would have been exposed to every kind of onslaught. And, so, rather than simply take as being credited as true the testimony that had been given, they did not deny it. They simply said, "But Him they saw not." They saw the grave clothes lying, as though a body were in them, empty. They saw the stone rolled away. They saw the women, that had seen the angels. They saw Peter and John, "but Him they saw not," and they were not prepared to base their future upon this, as good as it was. They were not saying, it was not so. They were simply saying that when He was alive, we saw Him, we walked with Him, we heard Him. If He is alive, we will see Him, we will hear Him, we will walk with Him. And they were not prepared to begin this phase of their ministry on anything less than an inward, personal, experiential reality. And so, they were on their way to Emmaus. Apparently they were simply going home.

I have heard messages preached here on doubting. I do not know that it was doubting. I am not saying it was doubting. I am simply saying that it was the recognition of honest men that, if the things said were true, there would be adequate proof, and they would not have to base their future on an assumption. There would be reality. And our Lord recognized this, and our Lord honored this. Do you see? He honored it. And He honors, He honors — may I be perfectly frank and say, He honors honest doubting. He honored Thomas. Thomas wasn't satisfied. He said, Oh, no. Don't involve me in this until I can put my finger into

His hands, and my hands into His side. Here was a man that said, My soul demands proof. I want reality. I am not going to be content with what I have heard. It is good. I have no question. But, if this is so, then, then... And with that, we find that the Lord honored Thomas. You say, He did? You say, Should everyone doubt? Oh, no.

But you see, the fact was that Thomas was honest in this. Honest to the place where he said, If, then...And I believe that in every human heart, there is certainly, some time, some place, some way, *an if, then...* And I can think of nothing more disastrous for your Christian character and development and ministry than if you have an honest *if*, accompanied by a *then*, and you just ignore it. Because you are going to have to live all your life in the crippling effect of not having had your *if* satisfied, so that your *then* could be strong. Inevitably God has set forth here that He will not play with the superficial. You see this in the case of the Pharisee. They said, If you be the Christ, [Tape skips] do a miracle. Prove. He had no time for them. No time for them. Why? Because they had not walked in obedience to the truth they knew. They had not accepted that which was given which was right, principally and positively right, and they were playing with Him. You cannot play with God. God is not going to have anyone play games with Him. [Tape stops skipping] And so, failing to walk in the light of the truth they had, they... the Lord Jesus had nothing for them nothing for them. But with these that had walked in light, and walked in truth, and met His terms, He honored the honesty of their heart. He recognized it. He accepted it. He met them on that level.

Now too frequently we find that there is a compromise here. People are saying, *If* there is a revelation, *then* I will do what I know I ought to do. There will never be any revelation. There'll never be anything from the Lord. When a person is walking in the light of all that he knows, and doing what is right, simply and only because it is right, he can expect the Lord to meet him in the terms of the particular problem that arises out of this. One can't otherwise. I believe that it is absolutely necessary for a person to repent, even though there is no Heaven. We dwelt last Lord's Day morning on this. If there weren't any Heaven, if there weren't any escape from Hell, I believe that morally awakened men ought to repent of their sin, because of the high treasonous nature of sin, the high crime of sin, turning from rightful government to anarchy. But be that as it may, we do know that repentance is unto life. We recognize, therefore, that we can't separate the two, and say to the sinner Repent, just because Jesus Christ is able, but we also know we can frankly say to him, Don't just repent because you will escape Hell, because there is no answer there. Jesus Christ must be seen, He must be met, and repentance must be based on this, that since He is God come in the flesh, lived and died and conquered death in rising from the dead, He is worthy to be obeyed, worthy to be served, worthy to be loved and worshipped and adored, and so I gladly give a quit claim deed to all the rights that I have claimed that are mine, and I am going to render to Jesus Christ the obedience, the service, the worship, the adoration that He deserves, just because He deserved it.

Now on the level of this, this commitment to the sovereignty of Christ, this commitment to the Lordship of Christ, because of the truth, then I know full well that when this is genuine, when this is real, there will be a revelation. There will be a revelation of Jesus Christ to the heart. The Christian life begins with personal revelation. It is thus that John Wesley¹, and I have repeated this so many times, that many of you are weary of it, John Wesley added to the testimony of the reformists, the other collateral truth that you cannot presume you are justified, because you believe in the doctrine, for when you have savingly repented and have received Christ you have the witness of the Spirit. You know because of an inward, personal revelation that God gives to your heart. And this is how anyone finds out they are saved. And if anyone has found out on any other basis than the fact that he has the witness of the Spirit, saved he may be, but the grounds of his assurance are utterly fallacious. There is no other real grounds for knowing that one is born of God than the fact that he knows by that inward revelation that the Spirit of God gives, called the witness of the Spirit that he is a child of God. Now there'll be collateral truth, there will be evidences, but we cannot begin the Christian life on the level of presumption, because God said, this, and I have done this, and this, and this, and therefore I presume I am saved. It is far too great a weight that you are suspending on far too slender a thread. To swing your soul out over the abyss of hell to land on the shore of eternity on the level of an assumption that, because I have done this, and this, and this, therefore I must be; I submit to you it is far, far, too great a weight to swing from such a slender thread. Jesus Christ is alive. He is the Son of God. He has conquered death. And He does meet the repentant believing heart. And He does witness. And you can know. This is the testimony. You can know. And the Christian life has to begin there,

¹ John Wesley (1703-1791) Anglican cleric, Christian theologian, and founding the Methodist movement.

because if it doesn't begin there, there is no place for reality thereafter. And there is no possibility of reality thereafter. And the Christian life must begin on the level of a personal revelation. Salvation is revelation, not only that Jesus Christ is...not only the revelation given in the Word, but the revelation confirmed in the heart.

Surely it is true in the Word, but how are you going to know that what you believe to be true in the Word of God is now personally, inwardly true in your own experience unless God confirms it to you. And so the beginning of the Christian life is on the basis of revelation that God has said to your heart, just as someone witnessed to you about Christ, and you believed that witness, now the Spirit of God witnesses to you that what you have believed and done is right and genuine, and you inwardly know that you have been born of God. And it is this, dear heart. It is this lack of inward reality that drives so many people out into agnosticism. So many young people that have grown up in our Sunday Schools, in our youth meetings, and in our church, get out to college, get out on their own, and they are no longer interested. This is the cry of pastors and churches across the Nation. Why? And the answer is that they have gone through a formula, they have gone through a ritual. They have gone, proceeded through a plan that has been laid before them. And when they have gotten out where the abrasive power of life has come to bear upon them, they have discovered they have not any reality, and so they just drift away. This is the cry of parents. This is the cry of everyone that is thinking about our day and our responsibility.

What about the terrifying attrition? All right, the answer is this: The Spirit of God is real, and redemption is real, not just a presumption; it is real. And when you are born of God there is reality and you know. Well now it begins that way; but it continues that way. Here were people that had heard Jesus Christ call, they had abandoned themselves to Him, and now they are being told that He is alive from the dead, and they simply culminate their recital by saying, "But Him they saw not."

Now our Lord dealt with them on the basis of their need. Oh, yes, He said, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken," and He has rebuked them, undoubtedly, and there is no question about that (Luk. 24:25). And when I said that God deals with us on the level of our need, I meant that, but I also meant that this is not the preferable way of course. If we are going to be driven, well He loves us enough to drive us, but there is a better way than that. But He did meet them there. Rebuking them, yes. But notice what He says, "Ought not Christ to have entered into His glory?" (Luk. 24:26) They had failed to understand that the only way the man Christ Jesus, God come in the flesh, could go back into glory and have all the attributes of the Triune God in Him, resident in Him, manifest through Him, was for Him to go to the cross and into the tomb, and vanquish death. Then by means of this, all the attributes of the Trinity could be manifest in a man, and He could be glorified. Christ, the anointed Man, God-Man, could now have exercised in Him and through Him all the attributes of Deity. And as a man in the glory and a glorified Christ, He could only enter into His glory by way of the Cross. He said, Didn't you understand that this is the way that it would be necessary "for Christ to enter into His Glory. So, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luk. 24:26-27). And so we find that He gave them, in addition to recognizing the honesty of their own need, He gave them further teaching, further proof. He expounded to them, and so in this you'll understand that when I speak of the necessity of revelation, in no wise am I reflecting on the necessity of teaching and contemplation, and meditation, in no wise. For I am certainly going to stand adamantly on this, that the ministry of God to the believer is essentially a teaching ministry. A preaching ministry, an exhorting ministry to the unsaved, certainly, but even there there has to be teaching. But to the church, to the believer, it is essentially an instructional ministry. So He instructed them.

And notice the Teacher, none other than the Son of God. And notice the teaching: "Beginning with Moses and the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures..." Oh, what a testimony. And of course, this was enough, wasn't it? Oh no, it wasn't. Do you see? It wasn't enough. It was necessary, but it was not enough. And so, if you have filled your notebooks with outlines, and filled your minds with truth, and memorized Scripture, rejoice and be exceedingly glad. It is glorious to have, but not necessarily enough. And if you could have no less a teacher than the Son of God, it still wouldn't be enough. It is good. It is indispensable, but just because you've heard, just because you can repeat, just because you can define and write and explain does not authorize you or me to say, This is mine, any more than the funnel should say, The gas that pours through me is mine. I am giving the gas. Oh, no. Something has to happen more than that to make it real, and so many a preacher has been a funnel for truth he takes out of his library, and he filters through the spout of the funnel, and many a Sunday School teacher has done the same, and many a Christian witness has done the same, and they have just gathered and poured in and forced down. There

is more than that. They could have gone back and said, Oh, do you not see what is in Moses, do you not see what is taught in the prophets? They could have said, Oh, this is marvelous, let us go, but you see they were honest of heart. They said, All right, that is good. We understand that. And their hearts burned. But the burning of their heart, and the illumination of their mind was not enough. There still was another something.

And so we find that as we come to the place where He was going away, He makes as if He would go on, because He is not forcing Himself, they say, Oh, stay with us. It is evening. The day is far spent. Stay, rest, abide. There is an inner hunger they cannot verbalize. There is an inner attraction. There is a sense of need. And now they must act obediently with this need.

And so, if you discover that in your heart teaching has done something and there is hunger, then cling to it. Cling to the source of hunger. Cling to the source of teaching. Cling to that which has somehow caused your heart to burn. But don't mistake the burning for reality. But cling, cling to the place, cling to the thing, cling to the book, cling to the Word, cling to the verse, cling, and don't let it go. Oh, how many times the Spirit of God has caused someone's heart to burn in the morning and then they go home and listen and talk, and dissipate and fritter away. They do not cling. And they don't possess. And the Lord always is making as if He would go on. "For He is only sought of them who seek Him with a whole heart" (Jer. 29:13). And you say, Oh, you remember that morning back there six weeks ago when we were in the Service, how God moved us. But what happened? You didn't cling. You let it be dissipated. You let it be frittered away in idle conversation. Perhaps even before you reached the street it just evaporated. Some of you, it would be wise, when the Spirit of God causes your heart to burn, you would sit there until the place is empty, and then quietly go out and you find a quiet place to sit and cling to what has been stirred within you. It is so easy for us to dissipate and fritter, and when the Lord would make to go on let Him go on, instead of saying, Oh, abide with us. Stay with us. We are beginning to touch reality.

So week after week, the Lord comes and walks and the heart burns, and then He goes on, instead of clinging, holding.

"And they came in and they had the meal, and the Lord took the bread and He broke it, and He blessed it, and then He said, Take, eat" (Luk. 24:30). And this is what happened. He was revealed unto them in the breaking of the bread. Where was it? It was at that point of worshipping faith, that place of a reminder of what He had said to which they now join themselves, as they remembered that He had said in the Upper Room, Bless this, there was a moment of revelation. But they cling. They clung to Him. They stayed with Him. They did not let Him go. Oh yes, they had heard the testimony of the women. They had heard the testimony of the angel. They had heard the testimony of Peter and John. They had heard the exposition of Christ, but still there was something needed. There had to be a revelation. There had to be a revelation. And if you are content with any of the testimony of the women, all right, you have what you are content with. If you are content with the testimony of Peter and John, you have what you are content with. If you are content with the testimony of Andrew Murray², F. B. Meyer³, you have what you are content with. You have the testimony of Albert Benjamin Simpson⁴; you have what you are content with.

If you have the testimony of the Word as you study it, you have what you are content with. But when you say, I can't let Him go unless He blesses me, then you will find He will stay, and He will press you through, and draw you through, but He will bring a revelation of Himself, and it is always Christ who is revealed. Any revelation that doesn't focus on the Lord Jesus Christ is to be immediately ignored. Anything, any experience that doesn't exalt Him and cause your heart to love Him more and cling more closely to Him and burdened greater for others to know Him, forget that. The revelation you seek is not experience. It is a revelation, the unveiling of Him, that "the eyes of our understanding may be opened in the knowledge of Him." (Eph. 1:18) The revelation of Christ. And each step of your way is to be equally as real as the one you began.

I want to say this to you. As you began in the Christian life, and so you have gone on. If you began with presumption, you have gone on with presumption. If you began with meeting God, you may have been detoured into presumption, but somewhere back in your memory you remember that you met God, and you knew God. And it is to you I speak and cry out this morning, saying, Oh, remember better days. Insist, for He'll meet your insistence. I can't let Thee go. I saw Thee at Bethel, said Jacob. "I

² Andrew Murray (1828-1917) He has authored over 240 Books

³ Frederick Brotherton Meyer (1847-1929) A Baptist Pastor

⁴ Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

saw Thy power, I saw Thy glory, and now I can't let Thee go, unless Thou bless me" (Gen. 32:26). And He made as if He would go on, and they prevailed upon Him. And when you find your heart burning and truth moving, and you say, My soul demands reality, don't let go. Cling. Meditate. Pray. Wait. For God will be found of them that seek Him.

We come to the Table of the Lord. Here is the Bread. Will it be a revelation of Christ to your heart this morning? Here is the wine. Will it be a revelation to your heart? To some of you, will it be just a little morsel on your tongue? moisture on your lips? To others, it will be the unveiling of the body and blood of Christ, and the wonder of His identification with you and yours with Him. To some it will be a ceremony. To others, it will be an experience. Here is the Table, and there are you. And you come to the Table as you are. And you receive what your soul demands, and what you need. Are you coming? He is here. He's not the bread or the wine, but He is in the midst of His people to be met by you. And He was revealed unto them in the breaking of the bread.

Shall we bow our hearts together? Our Heavenly Father, eternity bound men and women, walking in Adam's race, so skeptical, will not believe what we say. They don't believe it, Lord. We have told so many. They have heard, and heard, and heard again. They don't believe it. They'll only believe what they see. Unless they see Him, they won't believe us. But they can't see Him in us unless there has been a revelation of Him to us and in us. And our hearts cry out to Thee, dear Lord. There are twice as many people here this morning and more than there were in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost. And if, in the breaking of the bread today, there can be a revelation of Christ, Oh, what glory Thou couldst get to Thyself. But if it is the erudition of the speaker, the homeletical skill, the outline, tricky words and phrases, catchy amusement, O God, words, words words. Our soul cannot be satisfied with words, Only with Him, who is the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. Grant to Thy people today, a revelation of Him, unveiling of Him. If only one person could say, Oh, I see Him. I see Him. He is to be my life. I am in Him. He is in me. I see Him. The life would be changed. Their witness would be changed. Their home, their family, would be changed, just because they have had a revelation of Thy Son. And so we pray that as we come to Thy Table, we may be a prepared people that are coming, broken, remembering all the Truth they have heard, perfectly honest, transparently honest, and willing to say, My soul demands reality. There must be a revelation of Christ. I must see Him. Meet us, Lord. We are so needy, so needy. Meet us as we gather around the Table of Thy dear Son. In His worthy Name. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, May 6, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.