

THE WONDER OF GOD'S UNIVERSE

“There are three things which have a stately step, and four are comely in going: The lion, mighty among beasts, which turneth not away for any; a horse girt in the loins; or the he-goat; and a king, against whom none can rise up.” —Proverbs 30: 29–31. “From that day therefore they took counsel that they might kill him. Jesus therefore walked no longer openly among the Jews.”—John 11: 53, 54. “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazaræan. Jesus says to them, I am he. And Judas also, who delivered him up, stood with them. When therefore he said to them, I am he, they went away backward and fell to the ground.”—John 18: 4–6

The wonder of God's universe, I think, is presented in these verses. Men have wonders, they write books about them. Men themselves are regarded in that way, but they have all, without exception, gone into oblivion. The wonders of the world, mostly, have ended in ruin, ruin! It is happening currently, it is taking place right at this very moment, but men pride themselves in it. What men pride themselves in is going into ruin. But the wonder of God's universe, as I am thinking of it right now, is the movements of Jesus into death. It is the centre of God's universe. Everything, everything looked forward to it, now everything hangs on it.

I think it is suggested in these verses. These things that are referred to in Proverbs: it says, There are three things which have a stately step, and four are comely in going. Movements, power for movement. Think of the greatness of it, think of what is brought on to view—the lion, mighty among beasts, which turneth not away for any; nothing can divert a lion. Think of Jesus in His movements in John's gospel. We see Him right through John's gospel coming face to face with the enemy; personal confrontation with the enemy, and the enemy exposed. It is prefiguring what He will do to the man of sin—the wonder of man's world. It is all heading up to it, it is fast heading up to it. You can see signs of it developing, see signs which are making way for the emergence of the man of sin. The ideal of man as without Christ; his every hope, his only hope, his last hope. Think of the long history it has been of men rising up, leaders of

nations, of empires, and what it will culminate in—the man of sin who will assert that he is God. That's how audacious he will be, he will be believed; he will be an arch-deceiver, master deceiver. He will deceive the whole world. You say, Is it possible? It is going to happen, it is happening.

I only refer to that just to show the contrast. When Jesus came face to face with His enemies in John's gospel, He tells them they were liars, they were liars. They took up stones to stone Him, but they didn't dare throw them. It says, He walked no more among them—that's not because He was afraid of them, He is like a lion which turneth not away for any—what He was coming to deal with was the arch-foe of humanity, whose greatest instrument is death. The greatest power the enemy had is death. That was the sentence on man, and the enemy has capitalised on it ever since; he deceived man and deceived woman. How solemn that is. Right at the outset the enemy deceived, and he has been doing it ever since—six thousand years deceiving men. Are you deceived? Are you blinded? Are you ignorant? Are you indifferent? Are you unaware of what is happening? Have you got any idea of what's occurring, what's taking place? What Jesus has done!

So He goes on His way undeterred, unmoved, undiverted; couldn't be held up, couldn't be hastened, couldn't be moved aside. In chapter 10 they again take up stones that they might throw them at Him. They couldn't do it, it wasn't the divine time. That wasn't the divine way for Jesus to die. He wasn't going to die by stoning; that was not the way the divine counsels had planned that Jesus should die. Everything, you see, infinitely accurate in divine timing. At other points—it says in the scripture in Proverbs: a horse girt in the loins; that is, he goes forward to the battle, goes right into the enemy's domain to plunder him, plunder the enemy. Have you allowed Christ to plunder the enemy yet in your case, to rob him of his power over your soul? What simple thing in life is holding you in its power, away from the love of Jesus?

Think of the infinitude of the love of Jesus. Think of persons who have taken refuge in the love of Christ down the ages of time. That lovely woman in Luke 7, she took refuge in the love

of Jesus. She hadn't a doubt about it. What it drew out of her was love, much love, much love. She was a great lover in response to the greatness of Christ's love. Christ came so near, she could touch Him; you could touch Him today. It is no different now, He is no further away than He was from that woman. She had faith—have you got faith in Jesus? Think of the irresistible power of Jesus to draw broken hearts. Have you got a stern heart, stiff heart, hard heart? Jesus can break that down. There was no harder heart than Saul of Tarsus'. How did Jesus break it down? With a sword? No. With a hammer? No. How did He break it down?—with a question, with a question. Why persecutest thou Me? Why are you doing what you are doing? Why are you doing it? Why do you keep doing it? What are you up against? It broke him down; the hardest heart, the strongest will, the most rebellious spirit was broken by a question. It changed his life. It can change yours just as greatly, just as mightily, just as truly, just as certainly, if you will only come in faith to Jesus. Paul tells us later: I, myself, thought to do many things against the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaræan. I suppose he was planning, devising, counselling; I suppose he was taking measures of every kind to plot what he could do against Christ.

That's what these Jews were doing in John's gospel. It says, They took counsel therefore that they might kill Him. How were they going to do it? How were they going to bring it about? Other gospels indicate. They didn't want to do it at the feast. They reckoned on Christ thinking the way they thought. What did they do when the time came? See John 18—beautiful—Jesus knowing all that was coming upon Him—He knew why He had come, He had come to die, He had come as a mighty sacrifice for sin. God so loved the world—that's why Jesus came. God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him may not perish, but have everlasting life. That's why Jesus came to die. Nothing could deter Him, nothing could divert Him, nothing could hold Him up.

And the he-goat, you see, the he-goat retires—that's what Jesus did at this point. He walked no longer openly among the Jews. They hadn't reckoned on Him, they hadn't reckoned on His power, His skill, they hadn't reckoned on His wisdom. He was waiting for the exact moment

when He was to be delivered up. And what did He do? It says, He went forth and said, Whom seek ye? They said, Jesus the Nazaræan. And He said, I am He. And it says, when He said that, They went away backward and fell to the ground. They couldn't take Him. They couldn't lift one finger against Christ until it was the divine time to do it. That is the wonder of God's universe. I'd like an impression of it to lay hold of you—that Jesus went forth to die. He wasn't taken. No power in the universe could have laid a finger on Jesus unless it was the divine timing. And He surrendered, He submitted. He submitted to be taken to die. It's beyond human language to describe it. I can only speak of it as the wonder of God's universe.

Will you allow the power of it, the faith of it, to enter your soul, take possession of you? Jesus went into death, we read of it later, He went forth bearing His cross; a crown of thorns. They couldn't touch Him, they couldn't do a thing to Him, He set it out for Pilate. He says, Thou hadst no authority whatever against Me if it were not given to thee from above. He witnessed to the truth. Think of Jesus dying on His own testimony. Thou art then a King? I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth. Pilate says, What is truth? He went away, he didn't wait, he was too afraid. Think of the awful dilemma of that poor man, Pilate. The crowd clamouring for Christ, asserting he would lose Caesar's friendship unless he delivered Him up. What did he lose? He lost everything, and you will lose everything if you don't surrender to Jesus. I am not threatening, not preaching glad tidings of terror, or judgment, I am just telling you the plain facts—you'll lose everything if you don't submit to Christ.

So you can read it at your leisure, read it privately, watch this mighty Person, in all the stateliness of His going, proceeding into death to deal with death. He, by dying, slew death, overcame it, overcame the one who had the might of it, made him look foolish. Death fled in the presence of Christ. When the time came He arose from among the dead, ascended up on high, and sent the Holy Spirit. That is the majesty of Christianity. Do you want to have to do with anything that is so weak, and mean, and beggarly as worldliness in the presence of the

supremacy of Christ going into death, coming out in glory? That's Christianity. Lay hold of it.

For His name's sake.

J.S. Hales
