

Christ Excels Joseph

Now when Christ comes first out of the other world, from the dead, clothed with that heart and body which He was to wear in heaven, what message does He send first to them? WE would all think that as they would not know Him in His sufferings, so He would now be as strange to them in His glory; or at least that His first words would be to berate them for their faithlessness and falsehood. But here is no such matter, for His first word concerning them is, "Go tell my brethren..." (John 20:17). You read elsewhere how it is a great point of love and condescension in Christ so to entitle them. Hebrews 2:11 says, "he is not ashamed to call them brethren," though surely His brethren had been ashamed of Him. For Him to call them so when He is first entering into His glory argues the more love in Him toward them. He carries it as Joseph did in the height of his advancement, when he first opened his mind to his brethren; "I am Joseph your brother," he said (Gen. 45:4). So Christ says here, "Tell them you have seen Jesus their brother; I own them as brethren still." But what is the message that He would first have delivered to them? "That I," says He, "ascend to my Father, and your Father" (John 20:17).

This is a more friendly speech by far, and argues infinitely more love than that of Joseph (though his was full of compassion), for Joseph, after he had told them he was their brother, added, "whom you sold into Egypt"; he reminded them of their unkindness. Not so Christ. He says not a word of that; He reminds them not of what they had done against Him. Poor sinners, who are full of the thoughts of their own sins, know not how they shall be able at the latter day to look Christ in the face when they shall first meet with Him. But they may relieve their spirits against this care and fear by Christ's conduct toward His disciples, who had so sinned against Him. Be not afraid, your sins He will remember no more.

Yea, further, you may observe that He reminds them not so much of what He had been doing for them. He says not, "Tell them I have been dying for them" or "They little think what I have suffered for them"; not a word of that either. His heart and His care are set upon doing more: He looks not backward to what is passed, but forgets His sufferings, as a woman her travail, for joy that a man-child is born. Having now dispatched that great work on earth for them, He hastens to heaven as fast as He can to do another. And though He knows He has business yet to do upon earth that will hold Him forty days longer, yet to show that His heart is longing and eagerly desirous to be at work for them in heaven, He speaks in the present tense and tells them, "I ascend"; and He expresses His joy that, not only does He go to His Father, but that He goes to their Father, to be an advocate with Him for them, of which I spoke before. And is indeed Jesus our brother alive? And does He call us brethren? And does He talk thus lovingly of us? Whose heart would not this overcome?

Crying Us into Heaven

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. – Hebrews 12:24

Christ's blood in its cry has attributed to it here a further advantage over Abel's blood. For Abel's cried only from earth, from the ground, where it lay shed, and it cried only for an answerable earthly punishment on Cain, as he was a man on the earth. But Christ's blood is carried up to heaven, for as the high priest carried the blood of the sacrifices into the Holy of Holies, so Christ has virtually carried His blood into heaven (Heb. 9:12). This is intimated here in Hebrews 12 also, as the coherence shows. For all the other particulars (of which this is one) to which he says the saints are come are in heaven. "You are come," says he, "to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the church of the first-born who are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:22-23). All these things are in heaven; He names nothing is not there. He then adds, "and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks..." as a thing that speaks in heaven and is sprinkled from heaven, yea, a thing with which all heaven is sprinkled, as the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies was, because sinners are to come there. This blood therefore cries from heaven; it is next to God, who sits as Judge there, and it cries in His very ears, whereas the cry of blood from the ground may come up to heaven, yet the blood itself does not come there, as Christ already is there. Abel's blood cried for vengeance to come down from heaven, but Christ's blood cries us up into heaven...

In the second place, add to this Christ's intercession, which was the second thing propounded – that Christ by His prayers seconds this cry of His blood. So not only does the blood of Christ cry, but Christ Himself, being alive, joins with it. How forcible and prevalent must all this be! The blood of a slain man cries, though the man remains dead, even as it is said of Abel (though to another purpose) that "being dead he yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4). But Christ lives and appears. He follows the suit and pursues the hue and cry of His blood Himself. His being alive puts a life into His death. It is not this case as it was in the first Adam's sin and disobedience. Adam, although he himself had been annihilated when he die, set the stock of human nature to the propagation of children. But his sins would have defiled and condemned them to the end of the world, and the force of it to condemn was neither furthered nor lessened by his subsisting and being, or by his not being; it received no assistance from his personal life one way or other. The reason is that his sin condemns us in a natural and necessary way. But the death of Christ and His shed blood save us in a way of grace and favor unto Christ Himself and for His sake. Thus, Christ, who shed this blood, being alive, adds an infinite acceptance to it with God, and moves Him the more to hear the cry of it and to regard it.