Hebrews 13:13 (James Buchanan Dunlop) 146726

What Is the Camp?, What Is the Camp? (13:13)

Though it is true that God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, He has more highly honored us in these last days; He has spoken unto us by His Son (Heb. 1:1-2).Here the Spirit of God puts God's Son above and before all other prophets.

Again, though true that Moses was the Apostle (and was faithful in all his house as a servant), and Aaron was God's called and chosen high priest for this nation of worshipers in the flesh (Israel) we Christians are to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, thus exalting Christ above and before Moses and Aaron (Heb. 1:1-2; 3:1-6). Under the law, it was commanded and instituted by God Himself that sacrifices of bulls and goats should be offered-a shadow of better things to come. But now, Christ has offered Himself, and has risen and gone in and presented His own blood to God for us, having thus by one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10). Thus Christ's sacrifice is put above, and in the place of, all these other sacrifices which could never take away sins. The substance has come and taken the place of the shadows.

Furthermore, though perfectly true that God told Moses to make the tabernacle, and Solomon the temple, for a place of worship on earth under the law, now He has opened heaven to us, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; heaven itself taking the place of the tabernacle, and temple at Jerusalem, as the Christian's worshiping place, which we enter by faith and in spirit (Heb. 8:1-2; 9:24).

Then though God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, giving them the law, a covenant of works, they failed under it; and the Christian is not under law, but under grace, Christ having delivered us from the law and its curse, being made a curse for us, and "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." (Gal. 2:19; Heb. 8:9-13.)

Then, it was true that unconverted as well as converted were in the congregation of worshipers under the law; now, He who is a Spirit, and must have worship in spirit and in truth, is seeking such to worship Him. Who can do so? Those, and those only who, converted and sealed by the Spirit of God, have the power and heart for it. In short, Christ and Christianity have taken the place of, and are a direct contrast to, the law and Judaism; and God will not allow us to mix the two, or rather, I should have said, try to do so. So the word is, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

Now my reader must take notice that this is not a question of salvation. It is not that souls insidethe camp are not saved. Indeed, it is the saved ones inside that are called upon to go outside (and no doubt many souls are being saved where the gospel is truly preached inside); but it is a question of obedience, and of worshiping God according to the principles of Christianity, surely a very important thing in the eyes of those who love the Lord Jesus.

When the epistle to the Hebrews was written, there were many thousands of Jews that believed, and they were all zealous of the law, as the Apostle James witnessed. (See Acts 11:21.) If we compare dates, we shall find that God in longsuffering goodness and mercy allowed the believing Jews to remain in "the camp" for perhaps thirty years after Pentecost. And so Christianity and Judaism were going on together for some years. (See Acts 2:46-47; 21:20-25.) But God had not told them to leave it as yet. However, after Paul had gone to Jerusalem and, persuaded by James, had gone to the temple worship again to please the many thousands of Jews that believe, nearly losing his life at the hands of the unbelieving portion of Jewish worshipers, he was sent a prisoner to Rome, and judging from the dates, from there probably wrote this very epistle. The Spirit of God used the Apostle to call on the Christians in Judaism, the apostle James and all, to separate from the camp altogether, the time having come when God would no longer allow the two to go on, or appear to go on, together.

It was very trying for one brought up as a Jew in Paul's day' to obey this call, and so it is to us now in these days. But if we love Him who gave Himself for us, the way to show our love to Him is to obey His commandments and His words. (See John 14:21, 23). And if there is reproach promised us on obedience, let us not forget that it is His reproach. He has Himself endured far worse than any of us ever did or ever will have to endure; and His love and His power are with us and for us, to carry us through, yes, even to enable us to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for His sake.

But we are to "go forth unto Him without the camp." Where, outside the camp, shall I find Him, and in what special way is He to be found there? Christian brother or sister, there is a special place outside the camp where the Lord vouchsafes to be, and to manifest Himself in a very special and peculiar manner to faith; it is "where two or three are gathered together unto [Greek] MY name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). The place then is where two or three, or twenty or thirty, or two or three hundred, gather together unto His name; and the special way and manner He vouchsafes to manifest Himself there to faith is not to be described in words. It is to be felt and enjoyed by those who believe and obey His words. His actual presence (but not of course bodily) is in the midst. Oh, that all His dear people believed it!

I would add that this does not do away with ministry – divinely appointed ministry – in the Church of God. There is a ministry; there are gifts given unto men; there are evangelists, pastors, and teachers "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of [not a sect, but] the body of Christ." Eph. 4:11, 12. But these gifts are not given to lead Christians in worship. They are as the members of one's own natural body, for the use of the whole body; but the Head alone is He to whom all are to look, to lead and guide, especially in worship. And it is Christ who is the Head of His body, the Church, of which all true Christians are members (1 Cor. 12:12). He really does lead by His Spirit where He is owned as present and looked to as in the midst, and given His proper place, the place that only He has a right to, or is qualified to fill.

He, who places the members of the body in it as it pleases Him, uses evangelists, pastors, and teachers, when and where He chooses to do so, they looking to Him for guidance where to go, and where and how long to remain, to whom they are alone responsible for the use of their gift or gifts.

But in worship we come together not to hear a gospel address, not to be taught by a teacher, not to be exhorted by a pastor, but to give, as led of the Lord in the midst by His Spirit, praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to our God and Father, or it may be to the Lord Jesus Himself-something that requires no special gift in anyone, but something which every true Christian walking with God is capacitated to give, and which God alone is worthy to receive; that is, worship.

It could be that one, two, or three simple but true-hearted souls might each in turn be led in plain and unadorned words to be the mouthpiece of all the Christians present. They will do so, not because more fitted or more gifted or because called upon by any one to do so, but simply because led by His Spirit. We are to look to and own as our Head, our High Priest, our minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him our songs and words of praise ascend as acceptable unto God.

And this system of spiritual worship will never be done away with. It has begun on earth, and as hindered by these bodies of humiliation, it is never what it should be or will be. When we get the redemption of our bodies-when no longer “through a glass darkly, but then face to face,” knowing as we are known; when no longer scattered and divided and mixed up with the world, as many are, in worship, etc.; when all Christ’s blood-bought ones are gathered around Himself in glory, then shall the worship begun on earth continue on in glory forever, and be fully what it ought to be.

“Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts .... For who hath despised the day of small things?” (Zech. 4:6,10).

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